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IN SEARCH OF GOETHE FROM WITHIN

Letter to a German

You ask me, my dear friend,* for something about Goethe on the occasion of the centenary, and I have tried once or twice to see if I could satisfy your request. It is many years since I have read Goethe—why?—and I began by looking through the serried volumes of his works. But I immediately felt that my goodwill would soon be exhausted, that I could not do what you ask of me. For many reasons. Of which the first is this: I am not in favor of centenaries. But—are you? Does any European today find himself in the right frame of mind to celebrate centenaries? This year of 1932 preoccupies us too sternly for us to be able to transfer ourselves bag and baggage to any date of 1832. But that is not the worst of it. The worst of it is that, problematic as our life in 1932 has become, the most problematic thing about it is precisely its relation with the past. People are not clearly aware of this, because the present and the future always afford a more dramatic spectacle. But the fact is that the present and the future have often looked quite as difficult and forbidding as they do today, if not more so. What gives our present situation an unwonted seriousness in human annals arises not from these two dimensions of time but rather from the third. If the European casts up the balance sheet of his situation with some degree of perspicacity, he will find that he despairs, not of the present or the future, but precisely of time past.

Life is an operation which is done in a forward direction. One lives *toward* the future, because to live consists inexorably in *doing,* in each individual life *making* itself. To call this "doing and making," "action," is only to becloud the terrible reality. "Action" is only the beginning of doing. It is only the moment when one decides what to

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do, when one makes up one's mind. *Im Anfang war die Tat*[1] is, therefore, a good saying. But life is not only beginning. Beginning is already *now*. And life is continuation, is survival into the moment which will arrive after *now*. Life, therefore, suffers under an inevitable imperative of realization. This necessity for actual realization in the world, beyond our simple subjectivity and intention, is what is expressed by "doing." It obliges us to seek means to survive, to execute the future—whereupon we discover the past as an arsenal of means, receipts, norms. The man who has not lost faith in the past is not frightened by the future, because he is sure that in the past he will find the tactic, the method, the course, by which he can sustain himself in the problematic tomorrow. The future is the horizon of problems, the past is the *terra firma* of methods, of the roads which we believe we have under our feet. Consider, my dear friend, the terrible situation of the man to whom the past, the stable, suddenly becomes problematical, suddenly becomes an abyss. Previously, danger appeared to lie only before him, in the hazardous future; now he finds it also behind his back and under his feet.

Are we not undergoing something of the sort ourselves? We believed that we were the heirs of a magnificent past, and that we could live on the income of it. We find the future bearing down on us rather harder than it bore down on previous generations, we look back, according to our wont, for the traditional weapons; but when we take them up, we find that they are rubber daggers, inadequate gestures, theatrical "props" which shatter on the hard bronze of our future, of our problems. And suddenly we feel disinherited, traditionless, destitute, as if we were recent emigrants into life, without predecessors. "Patrician" was the Roman term for the man who could make a will and who left an inheritance. The rest were proletarians—descendants, but not heirs. Our heritage consisted in our methods—that is, in the classics. But the European crisis, which is the world crisis, may be diagnosed as a crisis of all classicism. We feel that the traditional ways are useless to solve our problems. People can go on writing books about the classics indefinitely. The easiest thing to do about anything is to write a book about it. The hard thing is to *live on* it. Can we live on our classics today? Is not Europe suffering from a strange proletarization?

The breakdown of the university in the face of men's present

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needs—the tremendous fact that the university has ceased to be a *pouvoir spirituel* in Europe—is merely a consequence of the same crisis, because the university is classicism.

Is not such a state of affairs the most contrary to the spirit of centenaries? In a centenary celebration, the rich heir complacently goes over the treasure which past centuries have distilled. But it is a sad and depressing business to go over a treasure of depreciated coins. To do so can only make us more convinced of the inadequacy of the classic. By the crude, demanding, inexorable light of the present vital urgency, the figure of the classic dissolves into mere phrases and boasts. In the last few months we have celebrated the centenaries of two giants—St. Augustine and Hegel—and the results were deplorable. The occasion being what it was, not a single fruitful and animating page could be published on either of them.

Our state of mind is precisely the contrary of that which might inspire us with acts of worship. In the hour of danger, life throws off all inessentials, all excrescences, all its adipose tissue, and tries to strip itself, to reduce itself to pure nerve, pure muscle. Herein lies the salvation of Europe—in a narrowing down to the essential.

Life is, in itself and forever, shipwreck. To be shipwrecked is not to drown. The poor human being, feeling himself sinking into the abyss, moves his arms to keep afloat. This movement of the arms which is his reaction against his own destruction, is culture—a swimming stroke.—When culture is no more than this, it fulfills its function and the human being rises above his own abyss. But ten centuries of cultural continuity brings with it—among many advantages—the great disadvantage that man believes himself safe, loses the feeling of shipwreck, and his culture proceeds to burden itself with parasitic and lymphatic matter. Some discontinuity must therefore intervene, in order that man may renew his feeling of peril, the substance of his life. All his life-saving equipment must fail, he must find nothing to cling to. Then his arms will once again move redeemingly.

Consciousness of shipwreck, being the truth of life, constitutes salvation. Hence I no longer believe in any ideas except the ideas of shipwrecked men. We must call the classics before a court of shipwrecked men to answer certain peremptory questions with reference to real life.

How would Goethe look before such a court? It might be sus-

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pected that he is the most questionable of the classics, because he is the classic to the second power, the classic who in his turn lived by the classics, the prototype of the spiritual heir—a fact of which he was very well aware. In short, among the classics, Goethe represents the *patrician*. This man supported himself on the income of the entire past. In his creation there is a considerable amount of mere administering the wealth he had received; hence, in his life as in his work, there is always the look of philistinism which an administrator never fails to possess. Furthermore, if all the classics are such, in the last analysis, *for* life, this man claims to be the artist of life, the classic *of* life. More strictly than any other, then, he must justify himself *before* life.

As you see, instead of sending you something for Goethe's centenary, I am, on the contrary, under the necessity of asking you for it. The operation which, it should seem, needs to be performed on Goethe, is too serious and radical to be undertaken by anyone who is not a German. Summon up your courage and perform it! Germany owes us a good book on Goethe. So far, the only readable one is Simmel's; and, like all Simmel's books, it is inadequate because that acute mind —a sort of philosophical squirrel—never considered his subject as a problem in itself, but instead took it as a platform upon which to execute his marvelous analytical exercises. On the other hand, this has been the essential defect of all German books on Goethe: their authors work *on* Goethe, but never question themselves about Goethe, never put Goethe in question, never work *underneath* Goethe. The frequency with which they use the words "genius," "titan," and other contourless vocables which everyone except Germans has left off using, is enough to assure us that their work is all mere sterile Goethean bigotry. Attempt the contrary, my dear friend! Do what Schiller suggested to us: treat Goethe like "a proud virgin, who should be given a child to humiliate her before the world." Write us a Goethe for the shipwrecked.

Nor do I believe that Goethe would refuse thus to be called before a court of vital urgencies. Perhaps this is the most Goethean thing to do with Goethe. Is it not exactly what he did with other things, with everything else? *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*. Here is life, here the dance must be danced. Anyone who wants to save Goethe must approach him from this direction.

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But I do not see that his work can be of benefit today if the problem of his life is not posed in a way different from that heretofore in use. The biographies of Goethe have been built up in accordance with the optics of monuments. Their authors would seem to have been commissioned to create a statue for a public square—or, vice versa, to compose guidebooks for Goethean sightseers. In the last analysis, they are concerned with going *around* Goethe. They are therefore concerned to produce a figure whose external form is extremely clear, which presents no problems to the eye, which is all in sweeping lines. Monumental optics, we may say for the moment, has four disadvantages: it is a solemn vision, seen from outside, seen from a distance, and lacking in genetic dynamism. This monumentalism becomes the more obvious the greater the number of anecdotes and details the biographer furnishes us, because the macroscopic and distant perspective according to which the figure is constructed does not allow us to see them in it, consolidated into its form, and, though we are given them, they have no meaning for us.

The Goethe I ask of you must be constructed in accordance with a contrary optics. I ask you for a Goethe from within.

From within whom? Within Goethe? But . . . *who* is Goethe? I do not know whether you understand my question. If you ask your own self, strictly and peremptorily, Who am I?—not, What am I? but, Who is that *I* of whom I perpetually talk in my daily life—you will become aware of the incredible manner in which philosophy has always gone astray by giving the name of "I" to the most unlikely things but never to the thing that you call "I" in your daily life. That I which is you, my dear friend, does not consist in your body, nor yet in your soul, your consciousness, or your character. You found yourself with a body, a soul, a character, as you found yourself with the capital which your parents left you, with the country in which you were born, and with the human society in which you move. Just as you are not your liver, be it sound or diseased, neither are you your memory, be it good or bad, nor your will, be it strong or weak, nor your intelligence, be it acute or dull. The I which you are, found itself with these physical or psychical *things* when it found itself alive. You are the person who has to live *with* them, *by means of* them, and perhaps you spend your life protesting against the soul with which you were endowed—of its lack of will, for example—as you protest

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against your bad stomach or of the cold climate of your country. The soul, then, remains as much *outside* the *I* which you are, as the landscape remains outside your body. Let us say, if you choose, that among the things with which you found yourself, your soul is the closest to you, but it is not you yourself. We must learn to free ourselves from the traditional idea which would have reality always consist in some *thing,* be it physical or mental. You are no *thing,* you are simply the person who has to live *with* things, *among* things, the person who has to live, not *any* life but a *particular* life. There is no abstract living. Life means the inexorable necessity of realizing the design for an existence which each one of us is. This design in which the I consists, is not an idea or plan ideated by the person involved, and freely chosen. It is anterior to (in the sense of independent from) all the ideas which his intellect forms, to all the decisions of his will. Our will is free *to realize or not to realize* this vital design which we ultimately are, but it cannot correct it, change it, abbreviate it, or substitute anything for it. We are indelibly that single programatic personage who must be realized. The outside world or our own character makes that realization easier or more difficult. Life is essentially a drama, because it is a desperate struggle—with things and even with our character—to succeed in being in fact that which we are in design.

This consideration permits us to give a biography a different structure from the usual one. Until now, the biographer at his most perspicacious has been a psychologist. He has had the gift of entering *into* a man and discovering all the clockwork which forms the character and, in general, the soul of his subject. Far be it from me to disdain these investigations. Biography requires psychology as it requires physiology. But all that is pure information.

We must get over the error which makes us think that a man's life takes place inside himself and that, consequently, it can be reduced to pure psychology. Would that our lives did take place inside ourselves! Then life would be the easiest thing imaginable: it would be to float in its own element. But life is as far as possible from a subjective phenomenon. It is the most objective of all realities. It is a man's *I* finding itself submerged in precisely what is not himself, in the pure *other* which is his environment. To live is to be outside oneself, to realize oneself.—The vital program which each one of us irremediably is, overpowers environment to lodge itself there. This

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unity of dramatic dynamism between the two elements, the I and the world—is life. Hence it forms a circumference within which are the person, the world, and . . . the biographer. For this is the real *within* from which I wish you to look at Goethe. Not the within of Goethe, but the within of his life, of his drama. It is not a matter of seeing Goethe's life *as* Goethe saw it, with his subjective vision, but of entering, *as* biographer, into the magic circle of that phenomenon to witness the momentous objective event which that life was, and of which Goethe was only one ingredient.

Nothing can so properly be called *I* as that programatic personage, because upon its peculiarity depends the value which all *our* things—our body, our soul, our character, our circumstances—finally assume in our life. They are ours through their favorable or unfavorable relation to the personage who has to be realized. For this reason, it cannot be said that two different men find themselves in the same situation. The disposition of things around them, which abstractly would seem to be identical, responds differently to the different inner destiny which is each of them. I am a certain absolutely individual pressure upon the world: the world is the no less definite and individual resistance to that pressure.

A man—that is, his soul, his gifts, his character, his body—is the sum of organs *by* which his life is lived; he is therefore equivalent to an actor bidden to represent the personage which is his real I. And here appears the most surprising thing in the drama of life: a man possesses a wide margin of freedom with respect to his I or destiny. He can refuse to realize it, he can be untrue to himself. Then his life lacks authenticity. If "vocation" is not taken to mean what it commonly does—merely a generic form of professional occupation, of the civil *curriculum*—but to mean an integral and individual program of existence, the simplest thing would be to say that our I is our vocation. Thus we can be true to our vocation to a greater or lesser degree, and consequently have a life that is authentic to a greater or lesser degree.

If the structure of human life is viewed in this light, the most important problems for a biography will be the two following, which have not as yet been much considered by biographers. The first consists in determining what the subject's vital vocation was, though it is entirely possible that he was never aware of it. Every life is, more or less, a ruin among whose debris we have to discover what the person

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ought to have been. This obliges us to construct for ourselves—as the physicist constructs his "models"—an imaginary life of the individual, the graph of his successful life, upon which we can then distribute the jags (they are sometimes enormous) which external destiny inflicted. We all feel our real life to be a deformation—sometimes greater, sometimes less—of our possible life. The second problem is to weigh the subject's fidelity to this unique destiny of his, to his possible life. This permits us to determine the degree of authenticity of his actual life.

The matter of the greatest interest is not the man's struggle with the world, with his external destiny, but his struggle with his vocation. How does he behave when faced with his inexorable vocation? Does he subscribe to it basically; or, on the contrary, is he a deserter from it, does he fill his existence with substitutes for what would have been his authentic life? Perhaps the most tragic thing about the human situation is that a man may try to supplant himself, that is, to falsify his life.—Do we know of any other reality which can be precisely what it is not, the negation of itself, the void of itself?

Do you not think it would be worth while to construct a life of Goethe from this point of view, which is the truly inner point of view? Here the biographer enters into the unique drama which every life is, feels himself submerged in the pure dynamisms, agreeable or painful, which constitute the actual reality of a human existence. A life viewed in this way, from its inwardness, has no "form." Nothing seen from within has form. Form is always the external appearance which a reality offers to the eye when the eye contemplates it from outside, making it a mere object. When something is merely an object, it is merely an appearance for another and not a reality for itself. Life cannot be a mere object, because it consists precisely in its execution, in being actually lived, and hence being never concluded, never definitive. It does not allow itself to be contemplated from without: the eye must transport itself there and *make reality itself its point of view.*

We are a little tired of the statue of Goethe. Penetrate into his drama—renouncing the conventional and sterile beauty of his figure. —Our body viewed from within has not that which is commonly called form and which, properly speaking, is merely external and macroscopic form; it has only *feinerer Bau,* microscopic tissue structure, and, in the final analysis, pure chemical dynamism. Give us a

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Goethe who is shipwrecked in his own existence, who is lost in it and never knows from one minute to the next what will become of him—the Goethe who felt that he was "like a magic oyster over which strange waves pass."

Is it not worth attempting something of the sort in a case like this? Because of the celebrity or the value of Goethe's work, we possess more data concerning his existence than we probably do concerning any other human being. We can therefore—that is to say, *you* can, because I know very little about Goethe—work *ex abundantia.*

But there is another reason for making the attempt precisely with Goethe. He is the man in whom for the first time there dawned the consciousness that human life is man's struggle with his intimate and individual destiny—that is, that human life is made up of the problem of itself, that its substance consists not in something that already *is*—like the substance of the Greek philosopher and, more subtly but in the last analysis equally, that of the modern idealist philosopher—but in something which has to make itself, which, therefore, is not a *thing* but an absolute and problematical *task.* That is why we see Goethe perpetually scrutinizing his own life. It is as idle to attribute this obsession to egotism as it is to interpret it "artistically" and present us with a Goethe making his own statue. Art, all art, is a highly respectable matter, but it is superficial and frivolous if it is compared with the terrible seriousness of life. Let us therefore avoid lightly referring to an art of life. Goethe is perpetually preoccupied with his life, simply because life *is* preoccupation with itself.[2] His understanding of this fact makes him the first of our contemporaries, if you like, the first of the Romantics. Because that is what, under its literary-historical significations, Romanticism means: the preconceptual discovery that life is not a reality which encounters a greater or lesser number of problems, but that is consists exclusively in the problem of itself.

Obviously Goethe throws us off the track because his idea of life is biological, botanical. Like all the past, he has an external conception of life. But this means only that the ideas which a man conceives are superficial compared with his vital, preintellectual verity. Goethe thinks of his life under the image of a plant, but he feels it, he *is* it, as a dramatic preoccupation with his own self.

I am afraid that this botanism of Goethe as a thinker makes him sterile for the demands of modern man. On the other hand, we can

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profit by a number of the terms he used. When, undertaking to answer the same question I put before—that agonizing Who am I?—he replied: An *entelechy,* he used what is perhaps the best word to designate that vital design, that inexorable plan, in which our real I exists. Each one of us is "he whom he has to become," although perhaps he never succeeds in becoming anything. Can this be expressed by one word better than it is expressed by the word "entelechy"? But the ancient vocable carries with it a millennial biological tradition which gives it a smack of the zoo, the connotation of something torpid, of something extrinsic, of an organic force magically ingrafted into animal and plant. Goethe furthermore weakens the question, *Who* am I? into the traditional *What* am I?

But beneath his official ideas, we come upon a Goethe laboriously groping after the mystery of the authentic I which lies behind our actual life like its mysterious root, as the hand lies behind the thrown dart, and which cannot be conceived under any of the external and cosmic categories. Thus in *Poetry and Reality*: "All men of good breeding feel, as their culture increases, that they are called upon to play a twofold role in the world, one real and the other ideal, and in this feeling is to be sought the foundation of everything noble. What the real role that has been given us is, and in what it consists, we clearly discern. On the other hand, it is very rarely that we succeed in reaching clarity concerning the second role. However much a man searches heaven and earth, the present and the future, for his higher destiny, he remains the victim of a perennial vacillation, of an external influence which perpetually troubles him until, once and for all, he makes up his mind to declare that right is that which accords with him."

The I which is our vital design, "that which we are to be," is here called *Bestimmung.* But this word suffers from the same ambiguities as "destiny" (*Schicksal*). What is our destiny—the inner or the outer, that which we were to be, or that which our character and the world force us to be? Goethe therefore distinguishes between our real—that is, actual—destiny, and our ideal or higher destiny, which is, as we have seen, our authentic destiny. The other arises from the deformation which is inflicted on us by the world, "with its perpetually troubling influence," which leads us astray with respect to our true destiny.

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Nevertheless, Goethe here remains imprisoned within the traditional idea which confuses the I which each must be, whether he will or no, with a generic, normative I which "ought to be"—individual and inescapable destiny with the "moral" destiny of man (which is merely a concept by which man tries to justify his existence), with the abstract meaning of the species. This dichotomy, this state of confusion, into which he is driven by tradition, is the cause of his "perennial vacillation" (*ewigen Schwanken*), because our moral destiny will always be subject to dispute, as is everything "intellectual." He feels that the primary ethical norm cannot be a juxtaposition of life with something which life can definitely set aside. He half sees that life is in itself ethical, in a more basic sense of the word, that in man the imperative forms a part of his own reality. The man whose entelechy is, let us say, to be a thief has to be one, even though his moral ideas are opposed to it, suppress his unchangeable destiny, and manage to make his actual life that of a law-abiding citizen. It is a terrible thing, but there is no denying it: the man who *had to be* a thief and, by a virtuous effort of will succeeds in not being one, falsifies his life.[3] So let there be no confounding the *ought to be* of morality, which inhabits man's intellectual region, with the vital imperative, the *has to be* of personal vocation, situated in the most profound and primary region of our being. All the things of the intellect and the will are secondary, are actually a reaction provoked by our basic being. If the human intellect functions, it is actually in order to solve the problems which the man's inner destiny sets it.

It is through this that, at the end of the paragraph, Goethe emerges from his confusion: "right is what accords with" the individual (*was ihm gemäss ist*). For the imperative of intellectual and abstract ethics is substituted the inner, concrete, vital imperative.

Man recognizes his I, his unique vocation, only through the liking or aversion aroused in him by each separate situation. Unhappiness, like the needle of a registering apparatus, tells him when his actual life realizes his vital program, his entelechy, and when it departs from it. So Goethe to Eckermann in 1829: "Man, with all his preoccupations and efforts, is delivered over to the outward, to the world around him, and must try to know it and make it serviceable to him to the extent required by his ends. But concerning himself he knows only when he is satisfied and when he suffers, and only his

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sufferings and his satisfactions instruct him concerning himself, teach him what to seek and what to avoid. For the rest, man is a confused creature; he knows not whence he comes or whither he goes, he knows little of the world, and above all, he knows little of himself."

Only his sufferings and his satisfactions instruct him concerning himself. Who is this "himself" which is only discernible *a posteriori,* in its collision with what befalls it? Obviously it is our life-design, which, in the case of suffering, does not coincide with our actual life: the man is torn apart, is cut in two—the man who had to be and the man he came to be. Such a dislocation manifests itself in the form of grief, anxiety, ennui, depression, emptiness; coincidence, on the contrary, produces the prodigious phenomenon of happiness.

It is surprising that no one has emphasized the constant contradiction between the ideas which Goethe as a thinker held about the world (the least valuable part of his work: his Spinozan optimism, his *Naturfrömmigkeit,* his botanical image of life, according to which everything in life should proceed calmly, with no painful straying from the road, in accordance with a gentle cosmic necessity) and his own life, including his work. For plant, animal, or star, to live is to have no doubts concerning its own being. None of them has to decide what it will be the next instant. Thus their life is not drama but . . . evolution. But man's life is exactly the opposite: it is having to decide every moment what he must do the next moment, and, therefore, having to discover the very plan, the very design of his being. The extent to which Goethe has been misconceived is almost laughable. The man spent his life searching for himself or avoiding himself—which is quite the opposite of trying to realize himself exactly. The latter presupposes that one has no doubts as to *who* one is, or that, once this is determined, the individual resolves to realize himself—whereupon the attention can tranquilly see to the details of executing the design.

An enormous part of Goethe's work—his *Werther,* his *Faust,* his *Meister*—presents us with beings who go about the world searching for their inner destiny or . . . fleeing from it.

I do not wish to go into particulars, for that would imply a claim to be well versed in Goethe—and you must not forget that these pages are written on the contrary supposition: they are questions which I put to you; they are problems which I ask you to clarify. In this sense, I permit myself to manifest extreme surprise at the fact

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that it is regarded as the most natural thing in the world that a man who developed so early as Goethe, who had created—though he had not completed—all his great works before he was thirty, is to be found, on the verge of forty, still asking himself, as he wanders through Italy, whether he is poet, painter, or scientist, and writing from Rome on March 14, 1788: "For the first time I have found myself and am happily in harmony with myself." And the most serious aspect of the case is that even then, apparently, he was wrong and will go on wandering for decades in search of the "self" which he supposed he had found in Rome.

What constituted tragedy used to be that a terrible exterior fate fell upon a man, a fate so unequivocal and inevitable that the unfortunate man succumbed under it. But the tragedy of Faust and the story of Meister are exactly the opposite: in both, what constitutes the drama is that a man sets out in search of his inner destiny and goes wandering through the universe without ever finding his own life. In the former case, life encounters problems; in the latter case, life itself is the problem. What befalls Werther, Faust, and Meister is what befalls the *Homunculus*: they want to be and they do not know how—that is, they do not know *who* to be. The solution which Goethe furnishes for Meister—suddenly dedicating him to medicine—is unworthy of its author; it is as arbitrary and frivolous as if Goethe himself had remained in Rome forever, copying the mutilated torsos of antique statues. Destiny is precisely that which is not chosen.

The German professors have made stupendous efforts to give a decent appearance to what these works of Goethe's *are* and to his ideas about life—without, obviously, attaining their conventional goal. It would be far more fruitful to attempt the very opposite: to start from the obvious contradiction between this optimistic concept of nature, this confidence in the cosmos, which inspires all Goethe's relations with the universe, and the constant, painful preoccupation with his own life, with himself, which will not let him relax for an instant. Only after this contradiction has once been recognized is there revealed to us the fecund task of trying to solve it, of explaining it systematically. That is what biography is: a system in which the contradictions of a human life are unified.

You see by now that I have an unduly naive idea of Goethe. Perhaps because I do not know him well, everything about him

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presents itself to me as a problem. Even the smallest details of his physical person and of his adventures puzzle me. For example: I fail to understand why his biographers do not try to explain to us why this man, who seems to have had such a fortunate life in every way, should be the human being concerning whom we have documentary evidence that he spent most days in a state of depression. The external circumstances of his life *appear*—at least so his biographers assure us—favorable; in character he was jovial, positively a *Frohnatur*. Then why such frequent depressions?

"So still und so sinnig!
Es fehlt dir was, gesteh es frei."
"Zufrieden bin ich,
Aber mir ist nicht wohl dabei."[4]

Persistent depression is only too clearly a sign that a man is living contrary to his vocation.

I say the same of his famous "rigidity," his perpendicular walk. Goethe's character has an admirable elasticity which gives him a limitless power of accommodation. His versatility, his wealth of nuances, his awareness of his surroundings, are prodigious gifts. Then why, nevertheless, is he stiff, rigid? Why did he walk among people holding his body like a banner borne in procession? Let it not be said that this is of no importance. "A man's appearance is the best text for anything that can be felt or said about him." (Stella.) I assume that it is not improper for me to urge you to dedicate a "physiognomic fragment" to Goethe! I especially recommend to you the Diary of Friederike Brion—July 7 to 12, 1795—"a bitter apathy rests on his brow like a cloud." And particularly what follows—which I do not transscribe so that I shall not feel obliged to tell you what I think about it. Neither should you forget "some unpleasant lines about his mouth," of which Leisewitz speaks in his Diary—August 14, 1780—and which can be perfectly seen in almost all of Goethe's juvenile portraits.

I fear that if you follow my suggestions you will cause a great scandal in Germany, because the Goethe who would emerge would be approximately the opposite of the one portrayed in the gospels so far produced by the German press. Nothing, indeed, could be more heterodox than to present Goethe as a man full of marvelous gifts, with magical springs of enthusiasm, with a splendid character—energetic, pure, generous, and jovial—but . . . perpetually untrue to his destiny. Hence

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his depressions, his stiffness, his distance from his surroundings, his bitterness. It was a life *à rebours*. His biographers are satisfied to watch his gifts and his character function—both of which are indeed admirable and offer an enchanting spectacle to anyone who looks at the surface of Goethe's existence. *But a man's life is not the operation of the exquisite mechanisms which Providence put inside him.* The crucial question is to ask oneself in *whose* service they operate. Was the man Goethe in the service of his vocation, or was he, rather, a perpetual deserter from his inner destiny? Naturally, I am not going to solve this dilemma. Therein lies the serious and radical operation to which I alluded before, and which only a German can undertake.

But I do not need to conceal my impression—perhaps unfounded, probably naive—that in Goethe's life there are too many flights. He begins by fleeing from all his real loves, which are those of his youth. He flees from his life as a writer to fall into that unhappy Weimar episode—Weimar is the greatest *malentendu* in German literary history; who knows but that it prevented German literature from being the finest literature in the world! Yes! even if at first sight this appears to you to be an error, an intolerable paradox, and even if it should prove to be so in the long run—believe me, I have plenty of reasons for being guilty of it! But then Goethe flees from Weimar, which was already itself a flight, and this time his flight even has the material, police-blotter tokens of a flight: he flees from Aulic Councillor Goethe to Jean Philippe Möller, merchant, who presently becomes a forty-year-old student of painting in Rome.

His biographers, determined as ostriches to gather all the stones in the Goethean landscape as if they were roses, undertake to make us believe that in his amorous flights Goethe fled from what was not his destiny in order to remain all the more faithful to his authentic vocation. But what was his authentic vocation?

I am not going to abuse your patience by developing the theory of vocation for you—it implies a whole philosophy. I should only like to call to your attention the fact that a vocation, although it is always individual, is obviously composed of numerous generic ingredients. However much of an individual you may be, my dear friend, you have to be a man, to be a German or a Frenchman, to be of one period or another, and each one of these designations brings in its train a whole repertory of definite destinies. However, all this is

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not properly destiny until it has been individually modulated. Destiny is never abstract and generic, although not all destinies have the same degree of concretion. One man is born into the world to fall in love with a single and particular woman, and, consequently, it is not likely that he will find her. Fortunately, most men have a less differentiated amatory destiny and can actualize their sentiments with vast legions of homogeneous femininity—as who should say, one with blondes, another with brunettes. When we speak of life, every word must be completed by the appropriate index of individuation. This deplorable necessity is indeed a part of man's destiny as man: to live *in particular* he has to speak *in general.*

Goethe's vocation! If one thing in the world is clear, this is that thing! Certainly, it would be a fundamental error to believe that a man's vocation coincides with his most indisputable gifts. Schlegel said: "Where there is pleasure in a thing, there is a talent for it." What he so absolutely affirms is highly questionable. The same is true if the proposition is inverted. No doubt the exercise of an outstanding capacity commonly evokes delight automatically. But this pleasure, this automatic delight, is not the happiness of a destiny fulfilling itself. Sometimes a man's vocation does not run in the direction of his gifts, sometimes it runs contrary to them. There are cases—such as Goethe's—in which the multiplicity of gifts troubles and disorients the vocation, or at least the man who is its axis.

But setting all casuistry aside, it is more than evident that Goethe's destiny was basically to soar and sing. He appeared on this planet with a mission—to be the German writer on whom it devolved to revolutionize his country's literature and, through it, the literature of the world.[5] Given more leisure and more space, we could make our definition considerably more concrete. If we give Goethe's work a vigorous shake, we shall be left with a number of truncated lines which we can complete in our imagination as our eyes complete the broken bow which displays its stump against the sky. To do so will give us the authentic outline of his literary mission.

The Goethe of Strasburg, Wetzlar, Frankfurt still gives us reason to say: *"Wie wahr, wie seiend!"*[6] Despite his youth and the fact that youth means "not yet to be."

But Goethe accepts the Grand Duke's invitation. At this point I propose that you imagine a Goethe without Weimar—a Goethe

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thoroughly immersed in the life of the Germany of that epoch, a Germany all ferment, all rising sap, all open pores; a wandering, weather-beaten Goethe, with his material basis (economic and social) *insecure,* without a neat set of boxes filled with duly filed engravings, about which he perhaps never says anything interesting. In other words, the opposite of a Goethe enclosed at the age of twenty in the sterile flask of Weimar and magically desiccated into a *Geheimrat.* Life is our reaction to the basic insecurity which constitutes its substance. Hence it is an extremely serious matter for a man to find himself too much surrounded by apparent securities. A consciousness of security kills life. Herein lies the cause of the regularly recurring degeneration of aristocracies. What a delight to humanity an insecure Goethe would have been, a Goethe distressed by his surroundings, forced to realize his fabulous inner potentialities!

At the moment when the heroic springtime of an authentic German literature begins to appear in that sovereign soul, Weimar isolates him from Germany, tears his roots from German soil, and transplants him to the humus-less flowerpot of a lilliputian court. A stay at Weimar —Weimar as a watering place—would have been fruitful for him. The German literature which only Goethe could have renewed, is characterized by the union of violence and measure—*Sturm und Mass.* The *Sturm* of feeling and imagination, two things which other European literatures lack; the measure which—in different forms—France and Italy possess in abundance. Between 1770 and 1830 any German of the first rank could provide the factor of *Sturm.* What is post-Kantian philosophy but a prodigious *Sturm!* But usually the German is nothing but *Sturm*—he is without measure. His way of being what he is, always follows an orbit which the *furor teutonicus* renders eccentric. Imagine a moment when—not to mention the poets—Fichte, Schelling, Hegel should *also* have been endowed with *bon sens!* Well—by some fabulous chance, Goethe united both potentialities. His *Sturm* had developed sufficiently. It was time to encourage the other factor. Goethe was conscious of this. So he went to Weimar to take a few semesters of "Iphigenia-ism." So far so good. But—why, when his feet were so apt at running away, did he stay? Worse yet—ten years later he *did* run away, but he came back. His brief flight is, as it were, documentary proof that Goethe *ought* to have forsaken the court of Charles Augustus. We can follow, almost

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day by day, the petrifying effect which Weimar had on him. The man is slowly changed into a statue. Statues are men who can neither breathe nor sweat, because they have no atmosphere—a lunar fauna. Goethe begins to live in a direction contrary to his destiny, he begins a process of *de-vivification*. Measure becomes excessive and supplants the substance of his destiny. Goethe is a fire which needs a great deal of wood. In Weimar, just as there is no atmosphere, so there is no wood; Weimar is a geometric figure, the Grand Duchy of Abstraction, of Imitation, of the non-authentic. It is the kingdom of the *quasi*.

There is a little Andalusian town that lies on the Mediterranean coast and has an enchanting name—Marbella. The side of my family which I most resemble physically—not morally—my Andalusian and bull-fighter side, has its origin there. In that town, until about a quarter of a century ago, there lived a few families of ancient lineage who, despite the fact that they dragged out a miserable existence, stubbornly insisted upon behaving like noblemen of past ages and celebrated ghostly festivals of anachronistic pomp. On the subject of one of these festivals, the folk of the vicinity composed a quatrain:

In a quasi *city*
Certain quasi *gentlemen*
Riding quasi *horses*
Held a quasi *tournament.*

Not now can we say of Goethe, as we said earlier, "*Wie seiend!*" except for brief escapades, during which, for a moment, he lets himself be carried away by his destiny, and which confirm our hypothesis. His life acquires that strange appearance of being unsatisfied with itself, of leaving itself hungry. Whatever he is, it is neither basically nor wholly: he is a minister who is not seriously a minister, a *régisseur* who detests the theater, who is not properly a *régisseur,* a naturalist who does not succeed in being one; and though, by particular divine decree, he is irremediably a poet, he will force the poet he is to visit the Ilmenau mine and recruit soldiers there, riding an official horse named "Poetry." (I should be much obliged to you if you could manage to prove that this *quasi*-horse is a pure invention fabricated by some ill-wisher.)

It is a terrible example of how a man can have but *one* authentic life, the life which his vocation demands of him. When his freedom induces him to deny his irrevocable *I* and arbitrarily substitute some

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other for it—arbitrarily, even though in accordance with the most respectable "reasons"—he leads a spectral, unsatisfied life between . . . "poetry and reality." Having accustomed himself to such a life, Goethe ends by no longer needing reality and—as, for Midas, everything turned to gold—so, for Goethe, everything evaporates into a symbol. Hence the extraordinary *quasi*-loves of his maturer years. Even his early relation with Charlotte von Stein is equivocal—we should not understand it if his *quasi*-adventure with Marianne Willemer did not definitely reveal to us the capacity for irreality to which he had attained. Once the idea that life is a symbol is accepted, one thing is as good as another: it is as good to sleep with "Christelchen" as, in the "ideal-Pygmalionic"[8] sense, to marry a statue in the Palazzo Caraffa Colobrano. But destiny is precisely the opposite of the "as good as" of symbolism!

Here we can discern the origin of an idea. All our ideas are reactions—positive or negative—to the situations with which our destiny confronts us. Goethe, as a man who lives a life different from his own, who supplants himself, is obliged to justify himself to himself. (I cannot now demonstrate to you why self-justification is one of the essential components of every life, be it authentic or false. A man *cannot* live without justifying his life to himself, he cannot even take a single step.) Hence the myth of symbolism. I am not discussing its truth or lack of truth in any of its many possible senses. I am interested solely in its genesis and its *vital* truth.

"I have regarded my motives and my efforts as merely symbolical, and at bottom it was a matter of comparative indifference (*ziemlich gleichgültig*) to me whether I found myself making pots or pans." These words, which have so often been commented upon, wing their way out of Goethe's old age and settle gracefully on his youth, on Werther's grave. They are bloodless Wertherism. What the pistol did there, indifference does here. In either case, we are dealing with a man who refuses to live his destiny. If all that a man does is mere symbol, what is the definite reality which is symbolized in it, in what does his authentic task consist? If what he *has to do,* his task, is neither pots nor pans, it must be something else. What? What is true life, according to Goethe? Obviously something that will be to any concrete life what the *Urpflanze* ("proto-plant") is to each individual plant—the mere form of life, without its determinate contents. My

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friend, it is impossible that there should be a more complete reversal of the truth. Because living is precisely the inexorable necessity to make onself determinate, to *enter into an exclusive destiny,* to accept it—that is, to resolve to *be it.* We *have,* whether we like it or not, to realize our "personage," our vocation, our vital program, our "entelechy"—there is no lack of names for the terrible reality which is our authentic I. This means that living is essentially an imperative basically opposite to that which Goethe proposes to us when he urges us to withdraw from the concrete periphery where life delineates its *exclusive* contour, toward its abstract center—towards the *Urleben,* "proto-life." From actual being to mere potential being. Because that is what the *Urpflanze* and the *Urleben* are: limitless potentiality. Goethe refuses to enclose himself in a destiny which, as such, excludes all other possibilities except one. Goethe wants to remain . . . *available.* Perpetually. His vital consciousness, which is something more profound and primitive than *Bewusstsein überhaupt,* ("consciousness in general"), makes him feel that this is the great sin and he tries to justify himself to himself. How? By corrupting himself with two ideas. One, the idea of activity (*Tätigkeit*). "You have to *be!*" life said to him, for life always has a voice and is therefore vocation. And he defended himself: "But I *am,* since I perpetually *act*: I make pots, I make pans; I never rest for an instant." "That is not enough!" life went on. "What matters is not pots and pans. It is not enough to *act;* you have to *make* your *I,* your absolutely individual destiny. You have to make up your mind irremediably. To live fully is to be something irrevocably." Whereupon Goethe, the great magician, tried to enchant life with the beautiful song of the other idea: symbolism. "True life is the *Urleben* which renounces (*entsagen*) subjecting itself to a determinate form," sang Wolfgang deliciously to his accusing heart.

We can understand why, in his first and sincere impression of Goethe, before he was captured by the charm that Goethe exercised on his intimates, Schiller despaired of the Weimar courtier. Schiller is completely the opposite—infinitely less gifted than Goethe, but his sharp profile is the beak-head of a war galley, with which he cleaves the foamy sea of life and unhesitatingly grapples himself to his destiny. And Goethe? *"Er 'bekennt' sich zu nichts."* "He commits himself to nothing." *"Er ist an Nichts zu fassen."* "There is no laying hands on him."

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Hence Goethe's eagerness to defend to himself an idea of all reality *sub specie aeternitatis*. As there is a proto-plant and a proto-life, there is a proto-poetry, without time or place or mannerism. All Goethe's life is an attempt to manumit himself from serfdom to the spatio-temporal glebe, from the concreteness of destiny in which, precisely, life consists. He aspires to utopism and uchronism.

This produces a most curious human deformation in him. He had been the man to originate a poetry produced from within the human being's individual reality, from within that most personal I which is immersed in its world, in its external destiny. But he swims so directly against the current of his vocation that he ends by being unable to produce anything *from within* himself. To create, he has first to imagine himself as other than he is—a Greek, a Persian—pots, pans. Because these are Goethe's most subtle but most significant flights: his flight to Olympus, his flight to the East. He cannot create from within his irrevocable I, from within his Germanity. Inspiration has to take him unawares, for a new idea to lay hold on him and bring forth *Hermann und Dorothea*. Even so, he presents it with the orthopedic apparatus of the hexameter, which interposes its foreign framework between the original inspiration and the work, forcing upon it a remoteness, a solemnity, a monotony which emasculate it and which give it in exchange . . . the *species aeternitatis*.

The fact is that *there is no species aeternitatis*. And not fortuitously. What there *is,* is the real, *what composes destiny*. And the real is never *species, aspect, spec*tacle, an object of contemplation. All that is precisely the unreal. It is our idea, not our being. Europe needs to cure itself of its "Idealism"—which is also the only way to overcome all materialism, positivism, utopism. Ideas are always too close to our whim, are obedient to it—they are always revocable. We have, no doubt, increasingly to live *with* ideas—but we must stop living *from* our ideas and learn to live *from* our inexorable, irrevocable destiny. Our destiny must determine our ideas, and not vice versa. Primitive man was lost in the world of things, there in the forest; we are lost in a world of ideas which show us existence as a cupboard full of equivalent possibilities, of things comparatively indifferent, of *Ziemlichgleichgültigkeiten*. (Our ideas—that is, culture. The present crisis is less a crisis of culture than of the position we have given to culture. We have set it before and above life, when it ought to be behind and

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below life—because it is a reaction to life. We must now stop putting the cart before the horse.)

Life consists in giving up the state of availability. Mere availability is the characteristic of youth faced with maturity. The youth, because he is not yet anything determinate and irrevocable, is everything potentially. Herein lies his charm and his insolence. Feeling that he is everything potentially he *supposes* that he is everything actually. The youth does not need to live on himself: he lives all other lives potentially—he is simultaneously Homer and Alexander, Newton, Kant, Napoleon, Don Juan. He has *inherited* all these lives. The youth is always a *patrician,* always the "young master." The growing insecurity of his existence proceeds to eliminate possibilities, matures him. But try to picture to yourself a man whose youth surrounds him with conditions of abnormal security. What will happen? Probably he will never cease to be a youth, his tendency to remain "available" will be flattered and encouraged and finally fixed. In my opinion, this is the case with Goethe. In him, as there usually is in great poets, there was an organic predisposition to remain a youth forever. Poetry is adolescence fermented and thus preserved. Hence those sudden returns of eroticism in Goethe's old age, accompanied by all the youthful symptoms—joy, melancholy, writing poems. For such a temperament, the external situation in which the end of his youth found him was decisive—I mean his first youth, the original one. This, usually, is the first time that we feel the pressure of our surroundings. Serious economic difficulties begin, the struggle with the rest of mankind begins. The asperity, the bitterness, the hostility of our mundane environment appear. This first attack either forever annihilates our heroic resolve to be what we secretly are and gives birth to the Philistine in us; or, on the other hand, in the collision with the *counter-I* which the universe is, our I is revealed to itself, resolves to be, to impose itself, to stamp its image on external destiny. But if at this period, instead of coming against the world's resistance for the first time, we find it giving way before us, roused to no waves by our passage, fulfilling our desires with magic docility, our I will fall voluptuously asleep; instead of being revealed to itself, it remains vague. Nothing so saps the profound resources of a life as finding life too easy. Such was Weimar for Goethe at that decisive period. Weimar made it easy for his youth to encyst, and he remained forever available. His eco-

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nomic future was solved for him at a single stroke, without anything in particular being demanded of him in exchange. Goethe became accustomed to floating on life—he forgot that he was shipwrecked. Many of the activities which were destiny in him degenerated into hobbies. In the remainder of his life I do not find a moment of painful effort. And effort is only effort when it begins to hurt: anything else is . . . "activity"—the effortless effort which a plant makes to bear flower and fruit. Goethe becomes vegetable. The vegetable is the organic being which does not struggle with its suroundings. Hence it cannot live except in a favorable environment, sustained and coddled by its environment. Weimar was the silken cocoon which the caterpillar secretes out of itself to put between itself and the world.

You will say that I suffer from an unjustified Weimar phobia. Perhaps! But permit me this simple reflection:

You, my dear friend, are an intelligent German. Well—I ask you to imagine to yourself—to "realize," as the English say—the significance of the words "University of Jena" between 1790 and 1825. Did you hear me, my friend? Jena! Jena!! Thousands of miles removed from it in space, and still further removed by my difference from it, I, who am a little Celt-Iberian, born on an arid Mediterranean plateau at an altitude of 2,400 feet above sea level (the average altitude of Africa)—I cannot hear that name without trembling. The Jena of that period signifies a fabulous treasure of lofty mental incitements. Is it not a terrible symptom of Weimar's impenetrability that, though it is not a dozen miles from Jena, Jena never managed to affect Weimar in the slightest? I have never been able to imagine Fichte conversing with Frau von Stein, because I do not believe that a buffalo has ever been able to converse with a ghost.

. . . And Goethe had such a magnificent nature! With what exuberance and readiness he responded to any fragment of the real world which flung itself at him! It only took a little wood, and towering flames leaped up! Anything—a trip on the Rhine, a vacation at Marienbad, an interesting woman who crossed Weimar like a wandering cloud . . . flames, flames!

Weimar conveniently separated him from the world; but, as a consequence, it separated him from himself. Goethe looked so hard for his destiny, his destiny was so little apparent to him, because in looking for it he had made up his mind beforehand to flee it. From

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time to time, turning a corner, he suddenly found himself confronting the I which he was, and then, with exemplary ingenuousness, he exclaimed: *"Eigentlich bin ich zum Schriftsteller geboren!"* "I was really born to be a writer."

Goethe came to feel a mixture of terror and hatred for anything that meant an irrevocable decision. Just as he flees love at the very moment when it is about to become an abyss into which he will fall—this is, destiny—so he flees the French Revolution, the rising in Germany. Why? Napoleon told him: "Politics is destiny!"

Et cetera, et cetera! The theme is inexhaustible. I have dealt with it here one-sidedly, from but one of its aspects, exaggerating it. But to think, to speak, is always to exaggerate. By speaking, by thinking, we undertake to clarify things, and that forces us to exacerbate them, dislocate them, schematize them. Every concept is in itself an exaggeration.

It would now be proper to show how Goethe, who was unfaithful to his *I*, was precisely the man who taught us all to be true to ours. But let this task remain for the portrait of Goethe which you are to give us. There cannot be a more attractive subject. Because the fact is that neither his botanical ideas about life nor the way he conducted his own life are of value as an introduction, as a hodogetics of man in relation to his I or destiny. Nevertheless, beyond either, what doubt is there that, on our horizon, Goethe signified the great sidereal appearance which gave us the decisive initiation: "Free yourself from *what is superfluous* to yourself!"[9]

What I insist upon is this: in order to clarify the figure of Goethe so that it will signify this more radically, so that it will be of use to us, we must reverse our approach to him.

There is but one way left to save a classic: to give up revering him and use him for our own salvation—that is, to lay aside his classicism, to bring him close to us, to make him contemporary, to set his pulse going again with an injection of blood from our own veins, whose ingredients are *our* passions . . . and *our* problems. Instead of becoming centenarians in this centenary, let us try to resurrect our classic by immersing him in life once more.

On June 4, 1866, a favorite student of Mommsen's presented the following thesis for his doctoral disputation at the University of Berlin: *"Historiam puto scribendam esse et cum ira et cum studio."*[10]

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There is no naiveté greater than supposing that *ira et studium* are incompatible with "objectivity." As if objectivity were anything but one of the innumerable creations for which we are indebted to the *ira et studium* of man! There was a time when people believed that orchids were born in the air, without roots. There was a time when people believed that culture did not need roots. . . . It was only recently —yet it was long ago. . . .

(*Translated from the Spanish by Willard R. Trask*)

Footnotes

1. "In the beginning was the act."

2. Heidegger's admirable book, *Being and Time,* published in 1927, arrives at a definition of life not far from this. It would be impossible for me to say how close Heidegger's philosophy comes to that which has always inspired my writings —among other things, because Heidegger's work is not yet finished, nor, on the other hand, have my ideas been adequately developed *in print.* But I am obliged to say that I owe Heidegger very little. Of Heidegger's important concepts, but one or two at most have not been previously expressed in one of my books, sometimes thirteen years earlier. For example: the idea of life as uneasiness, preoccupation, and insecurity, and of culture as security and preoccupation with security, is literally to be found in my first work, *Meditaciones del Quijote,*—published in 1914!—in the chapter entitled "Cultura-seguridad," pp. 116-117. Furthermore, this thought is there first applied to the history of philosophy and culture, in the particular case of Plato, which is of such significance for the theme. The same is true of liberation from all "substantialism," from all that is "thing," in the idea of being—supposing that Heidegger has arrived at it as I have set it forth for many years in public lectures and as it is stated in the prologue to this first book of mine, page 42, and developed in my various expositions of perspectivism (though today I prefer to use more dynamic and less intellectual terms than this). Life as the confrontation of the I and *its* environment (cf. p. 43), as a "dynamic dialogue between the individual and the world," in many passages. The structure of life as futurition is the most persistent *leitmotiv* of my writings, inspired, certainly, by questions raised by the logic of Cohen but which are extremely remote from the vital problem to which I apply it. Likewise: "In sum, the resorption of the environment is the concrete destiny of man," page 43, and the theory of the "incorruptible base," which I soon afterward called the "authentic I." Even the interpretation of truth as *aletheia,* in its etymological sense of "disclosure, unwrapping, removing a veil or covering," is to be found on page 80, with the additional circumstance that in this book cognition, under the names of "light" and "clarity" (which are now so much in evidence!), already appears as the imperative and mission enclosed "in the root of the *constitution of man.*" I confine myself to making these remarks once and for all, since from time to time I find myself surprised that not even those who are closest to me have the faintest idea of what I have thought and written. Distracted by my images, they have slipped over my ideas. I am enormously indebted to German philosophy and I hope that no one will fail to credit me with having made it one of the principal features of my work to swell the thought of Spain with the

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full stream of German intellectual riches. But perhaps I have exaggerated this attitude and have too much concealed my own and basic findings. For example: "To live is certainly to deal with the world, to turn to it, to act in it, to be concerned with it." Whose is that? Heidegger's, in 1927, or mine, published under date of December 24, 1924, in *La Nación,* of Buenos Aires, and later in Volume VII of *El Espectador* ("El origen deportivo del Estado")? Because the important thing is that this formula is not accidental but is the starting point—no less—for my suggestion that philosophy is consubstantial with human life, because human life has to go out into the "world," which already in those early paragraphs of mine, signifies not the sum of things but the "horizon" (*sic*) of totality *above* things and distinct from them. To find here such facts as I have transcribed in this note will perhaps bring some slight feeling of shame to young men who were ignorant of them *in good faith.* If it were a matter of *bad faith,* it would be of no importance; the important thing for them is to discover that they were ignorant of them in good faith, with the result that they must become doubtful of their good faith. Strictly, all these observations are comprised in one, which I have always kept to myself and which I shall now laconically make. In 1923 I published a book which—with a certain solemnity which my present maturity would urge me to avoid—was entitled *The Theme of our Time.* In this book, no less solemnly, I said that the theme of our time consists in reducing pure reason to "vital reason." Has anyone yet tried—not to draw the most immediate consequences from this phrase, but simply to understand its meaning? People have gone on talking, despite my protests, about my vitalism, but no one has tried to think of the terms "reason" and "vital" in juxtaposition, as my formula proposes. No one, in short, has talked about my "ratio-vitalism." And even now, after I have emphasized it, how many can understand it, can understand the *Critique of Vital Reason* which was announced in that book?

As I have kept silence for many years, I shall return to silence for many more, with no further interruption than this hurried footnote, which really does nothing but set any strayed good faith on the right path.

3. The critical question is whether, in effect, being a thief is a form of authentic humanity—that is, if the "born thief" exists in a sense much deeper than Lombroso's.

4. *"So silent and thoughtful!*
You lack something—admit it."
"I am content,
But content does not put me at ease."

5. I stress the fact that this is only the generic expression of his vocation and even that only in reference to what may be considered the axis of it. Adequate clarity concerning what is here suggested to the well-disposed reader, can only be achieved by developing the theory of vocation.

6. "How full of truth, how full of being!"—Goethe's remark on a crawfish which he saw moving in a brook in Italy.

7. "How full of being!"

8. See the *Journey to Italy,* Rome, April, 1788.

9. See my essay, "Goethe, el libertador," published March 22 in the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* and read, with additions, at the University of Madrid on April 30.

10. "I maintain that history should be written with anger and enthusiasm."

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Flannery O'Connor

THE PEELER*

Hazel Motes walked along downtown, close to the store fronts but not looking at them. His neck was thrust forward as if he were trying to smell something that was always being drawn away. He had on a blue suit that was glare-blue in the day time, but looked purplish with the night lights on it, and his hat was a fierce black wool hat like a preacher's hat. The stores in Taulkinham stayed open on Thursday nights and a lot of people were shopping. Haze's shadow was now behind him and now before him and now and then broken up by other people's shadows, but when it was by itself, stretching behind him, it was a thin nervous shadow walking backwards.

After a while he stopped where a lean-faced man had a card table set up in front of a Lerner's Dress Shop and was demonstrating a potato peeler. The man had on a small canvas hat and a shirt patterned with bunches of upsidedown pheasants and quail and bronze turkeys. He was pitching his voice under the street noises so that it reached every ear distinctly as in a private conversation. A few people gathered around. There were two buckets on the card table, one empty and the other full of potatoes. Between the two buckets there was a pyramid of green cardboard boxes and on top of the stack, one peeler was open for demonstration. The man stood in front of this altar, pointing over it at different people. "How about you?" he said, pointing at a damp-haired pimpled boy, "you ain't gonna let one of these go by?" He stuck a brown potato in one side of the open machine. The machine was a square tin box with a red handle, and as he turned the handle, the potato went into the box and then in a second, backed out the other side, white. "You ain't gonna let one of these go by!" he said.

The boy guffawed and looked at the other people gathered around. He had yellow slick hair and a fox-shaped face.

* This is a chapter from a novel in progress.

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"What's yer name?" the peeler man asked.

"Name Enoch Emery," the boy said and snuffled.

"Boy with a pretty name like that ought to have one of these," the man said, rolling his eyes, trying to warm up the others. Nobody laughed but the boy. Then a man standing across from Hazel Motes laughed. He was a tall man with light green glasses and a black suit and a black wool hat like a preacher's hat, and he was leaning on a white cane. The laugh sounded as if it came from something tied up in a croker sack. It was evident he was a blind man. He had his hand on the shoulder of a big-boned child with a black knitted cap pulled down low on her forehead and a fringe of orange hair sticking out from it on either side. She had a long face and a short sharp nose. The people began to look at the two of them instead of the man selling peelers. This irritated the man selling peelers. "How about you, you there," he said, pointing at Hazel Motes. "You'll never be able to get a bargain like this in any store."

"Hey!" Enoch Emery said, reaching across a woman and punching Haze's arm. "He's talking to you! He's talking to you!" Haze was looking at the blind man and the child. Enoch Emery had to punch him again.

"Whyn't you take one of these home to yer wife?" the peeler man was saying.

"I ain't none," Haze muttered without drawing his attention from the blind man.

"Well, you got a dear old mother, ain't you?"

"No."

"Well shaw," the man said, with his hand cupped to the people, "he needs one theseyer just to keep him company."

Enoch Emery thought that was so funny that he doubled over and slapped his knee, but Hazel Motes didn't look as if he had heard it yet. "I'm going to give away half a dozen peeled potatoes to the first person purchasing one theseyer machines," the man said. "Who's gonna step up first? Only a dollar and a half for a machine'd cost you three dollars in any store!" Enoch Emery began fumbling in his pockets. "You'll thank the day you ever stopped here," the man said, "you'll never forget it. Ever one of you people purchasing one theseyer machines'll never forget it."

The blind man began to move straight forward suddenly and

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the peeler man got ready to hand him one of the green boxes, but he went past the card table and turned, moving at a right angle back in among the people. He was handing something out. Then Haze saw that the child was moving around too, giving out white leaflets. There were not many people gathered there, but the ones who were began to move off. When the machine-seller saw this, he leaned, glaring, over the card table. "Hey you!" he yelled at the blind man, "what you think you doing? Who you think you are, running people off from here?"

The blind man didn't pay him any mind. He kept on handing out the pamphlets. He handed one at Enoch Emery and then he came toward Haze, hitting the white cane at an angle from his leg.

"What the hell you think you doing?" the man selling peelers yelled. "I got these people together, how you think you can horn in?"

The blind man had a peculiar boiled looking red face. He thrust one of the pamphlets a little to the side of Haze and Haze grabbed it. It was a tract. The words on the outside of it said, "Jesus Calls You."

"I'd like to know who the hell you think you are!" the man with the peelers was yelling. The child passed the card table again and handed him a tract. He looked at it for an instant with his lip curled, and then he charged around the card table, upsetting the bucket of potatoes. "These damm Jesus fanatics," he yelled, glaring around, trying to find the blind man. More people had gathered, hoping to see a disturbance, and the blind man had disappeared among them. "These goddam Communist Jesus Foreigners!" the peeler man screamed. "I got this crowd together!" He stopped, realizing there was a crowd.

"Listen folks," he said, "one at a time, there's plenty to go around, just don't push, a half dozen peeled potatoes to the first person stepping up to buy." He got back behind the card table quietly and started holding up the peeler boxes. "Step on up, plenty to go around," he said, "no need to crowd."

Hazel Motes didn't open his tract. He looked at the outside of it and then he tore it across. He put the two pieces together and tore them across again. He kept restacking the pieces and tearing them again until he had a little handful of confetti. He turned his hand over and let the shredded leaflet sprinkle to the ground. Then he

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looked up and saw the blind man's child not three feet away, watching him. Her mouth was open and her eyes glittered on him like two chips of green bottle glass. She had on a black dress and there was a white gunny sack hung over her shoulder. Haze scowled and began rubbing his sticky hands on his pants.

"I seen you," she said. Then she moved quickly over to where the blind man was standing now, beside the card table. Most of the people had moved off.

The peeler man leaned over the card table and said, "Hey!" to the blind man. "I reckon that showed you. Trying to horn in." But the blind man stood there with his chin tilted back slightly as if he saw something over their heads.

"Lookerhere," Enoch Emery said, "I ain't got but a dollar sixteen cent but I. . . . "

"Yah," the man said, as if he were going to make the blind man see him, "I reckon that'll show you you can't muscle in on me. Sold eight peelers, sold. . . . "

"Give me one of them," the child said, pointing to the peelers.

"Hanh?" he said.

She reached in her pocket and drew out a long coin purse and opened it. "Give me one of them," she said, holding out two fifty cent pieces.

The man eyed the money with his mouth hiked on one side. "A buck fifty, sister," he said.

She pulled her hand in quickly and all at once glared around at Hazel Motes as if he had made a noise at her. The blind man was moving off. She stood a second glaring red-faced at Haze and then she turned and followed the blind man. Haze started suddenly.

"Listen," Enoch Emery said, "I ain't got but a dollar sixteen cent and I want me one of them. . . . "

"You can keep it," the man said, taking the bucket off the card table. "This ain't no cut-rate joint."

Hazel Motes stood staring after the blind man, jerking his hands in and out of his pockets. He looked as if he were trying to move forward and backward at the same time. Then suddenly he thrust two bills at the man selling peelers and snatched a box off the card table and started down the street. In just a second Enoch Emery was panting at his elbow.

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"My, I reckon you got a heap of money," Enoch Emery said. Haze turned the corner and saw them about a block ahead of him. Then he slowed down some and saw Enoch Emery there. Enoch had on a yellowish white suit and a pinkish white shirt and his tie was a greenpeaish color. He was grinning. He looked like a friendly hound dog with light mange. "How long you been here?" he inquired.

"Two days," Haze muttered.

"I been here two months," Enoch said. "I work for the city. Where you work?"

"Not working," Haze said.

"That's too bad," Enoch said. "I work for the city." He skipped a step to get in line with Haze, then he said, "I'm eighteen year old and I ain't been here but two months and I already work for the city."

"That's fine," Haze said. He pulled his hat down farther on the side Enoch Emery was on and walked faster.

"I didn't ketch your name good," Enoch said.

Haze said his name.

"You look like you might be follering them hicks," Enoch remarked. "You go in for a lot of Jesus?"

"No," Haze said.

"No, me neither, not much," Enoch agreed. "I went to thisyer Rodemill Boys' Bible Academy for four weeks. Thisyer woman that traded me from my daddy she sent me; she was a Welfare woman. Jesus, four weeks and I thought I was gonna be sanctified crazy."

Haze walked to the end of the block and Enoch stayed all the time at his elbow, panting and talking. When Haze started across the street, Enoch yelled, "Don't you see theter light! That means you got to wait!" A cop blew a whistle and a car blasted its horn and stopped short. Haze went on across, keeping his eyes on the blind man in the middle of the block. The policeman kept blowing the whistle. He crossed the street over to where Haze was and stopped him. He had a thin face and oval-shaped yellow eyes.

"You know what that little thing hanging up there is for?" he asked, pointing to the traffic light over the intersection.

"I didn't see it," Haze said.

The policeman looked at him without saying anything. A few people stopped. He rolled his eyes at them. "Maybe you thought the

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red ones was for white folks and the green ones for colored," he said.

"Yeah, I thought that," Haze said. "Take your hand off me."

The policeman took his hand off and put it on his hip. He backed one step away and said, "You tell all your friends about these lights. Red is to stop, green is to go—men and women, white folks and niggers, all go on the same light. You tell all your friends so when they come to town, they'll know." The people laughed.

"I'll look after him," Enoch Emery said, pushing in by the policeman. "He ain't been here but only two days; I'll look after him."

"How long you been here?" the cop asked.

"I was born and raised here," Enoch said. "This is my ole home town. I'll take care of him for you. Hey wait!" he yelled at Haze. "Wait on me!" He pushed out the crowd and caught up with him. "I reckon I saved you that time," he said.

"I'm obliged," Haze said.

"It wasn't nothing," Enoch said. "Why don't we go in Walgreen's and get us a soda? Ain't no nightclubs open this early."

"I don't like no drugstores," Haze said. "Goodby."

"That's all right," Enoch said. "I reckon I'll go along and keep you company for a while." He looked up ahead at the couple and said, "I sho wouldn't want to get messed up with no hicks this time of night, particularly the Jesus kind. I done had enough of them myself. Thisyer woman that traded me from my daddy didn't do nothing but pray. Me and daddy, we moved around with a sawmill where we worked and it set up outside Boonville one summer and here come thisyer woman." He caught hold of Haze's coat. "Only objection I got to Taulkinham is there's too many people on the streets," he said confidentially, "look like they ain't satisfied until they knock you down—well, here she come and I reckon she took a fancy to me. I was twelve year old and I could sing some hymns good I learnt off a nigger. So here she comes taking a fancy to me and traded me off my daddy and took me to Boonville to live with her. She had a brick house but it was Jesus all day long." While he was talking he was looking up at Haze, studying his face. All of a sudden he bumped into a little man lost in a pair of faded overalls. "Whyn't you look where you going?" he growled.

The little man stopped short and raised his arm in a vicious

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gesture and a mean dog look came on his face. "Who you tellin what?" he snarled.

"You see," Enoch said, jumping to catch up with Haze, "all they want to do is knock you down. I ain't never been to such a unfriendly place before. Even with that woman. I stayed with her for two months in that house of hers," he went on, "and then come fall she sent me to the Rodemill Boys' Bible Academy and I thought that sho was gonna be some relief. This woman was hard to get along with—she wasn't old, I reckon she was forty year old—but she sho was ugly. She had theseyer brown glasses and her hair was so thin it looked like ham gravy trickling over her skull. I thought it was gonna be some certain relief to get to that Academy. I had run away oncet on her and she got me back and come to find out she had papers on me and she could send me to the penitentiary if I didn't stay with her so I sho was glad to get to theter Academy. You ever been to a academy?"

Haze didn't seem to hear the question. He still had his eye on the blind man in the next block.

"Well, it won't no relief," Enoch said. "Good Jesus, it won't no relief. I run away from there after four weeks and durn if she didn't get me back and brought me to that house of hers again. I got out though." He waited a minute. "You want to know how?"

After a second he said, "I scared hell out of that woman, that's how. I studied on it and studied on it. I even prayed. I said, 'Jesus, show me the way to get out of here without killing thisyer woman and getting sent to the penitentiary.' And durn if He didn't. I got up one morning at just daylight and I went in her room without my pants on and pulled the sheet off her and giver a heart attackt. Then I went back to my daddy and we ain't seen hide of her since.

"Your jaw just crawls," he observed, watching the side of Haze's face. "You don't never laugh. I wouldn't be surprised if you wasn't a real wealthy man."

Haze turned down a side street. The blind man and the girl were on the corner a block ahead.

"Well, I reckon we gonna ketch up with em after all," Enoch said. "Ain't that girl ugly, though? You seen them shoes she has on? Men's shoes, looks like. You know many people here?"

"No," Haze said.

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"You ain't gonna know none neither. This is one more hard place to make friends in. I been here two months and I don't know nobody, look like all they want to do is knock you down. I reckon you got a right heap of money," he said. "I ain't got none. Had, I'd sho know what to do with it." The man and the girl stopped on the corner and turned up the left side of the street. "We catching up," he said. "I bet we'll be at some meeting singing hymns with her and her daddy if we don't watch out."

Up in the next block there was a large building with columns and a dome. The blind man and the child were going toward it. There was a car parked in every space around the building and on the other side the street and up and down the streets near it. "That ain't no picture show," Enoch said. The blind man and the girl turned up the steps to the building. The steps went all the way across the front, and on either side there were stone lions sitting on pedestals. "Ain't no church," Enoch said. Haze stopped at the steps. He looked as if he were trying to settle his face into an expression. He pulled the black hat forward at a nasty angle and started toward the two, who had sat down in the corner by one of the lions.

As they came nearer the blind man leaned forward as if he were listening to the footsteps, then he stood up, holding a tract out in his hand.

"Sit down," the child said in a loud voice. "It ain't nobody but them two boys."

"Nobody but us," Enoch Emery said. "Me and him been follerin you all about a mile."

"I knew somebody was following me," the blind man said. "Sit down."

"They ain't here for nothing but to make fun," the child said. She looked as if she smelled something bad. The blind man was feeling out to touch them. Haze stood just out of reach of his hands, squinting at him as if he were trying to see the empty eye sockets under the green glasses.

"It ain't me, it's him," Enoch said. "He's been running after yawl ever since back yonder by them potato peelers. He bought one of em."

"I knew somebody was following me!" the blind man said. "I felt it all the way from back yonder."

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"I ain't followed you," Haze said. He felt the peeler box in his hand and looked at the girl. The black knitted cap came down almost to her eyes. She looked as if she might be thirteen or fourteen years old. "I ain't followed you nowhere," he said sourly. "I followed her." He stuck the peeler box out at her.

She jumped back and looked as if she were going to swallow her face. "I don't want that thing," she said. "What you think I want with that thing? Take it. It ain't mine. I don't want it!"

"I take it with thanks for her," the blind man said. "Put it in your sack," he said to her.

Haze thrust the peeler at her again, but he was still looking at the blind man.

"I won't have it," she muttered.

"Take it like I told you," the blind man said shortly.

After a second she took it and shoved it in the sack where the tracts were. "It ain't mine," she said. "I don't want none of it. I got it but it ain't mine."

"She thanks you for it," the blind man said. "I knew somebody was following me."

"I ain't followed you nowhere," Haze said. "I followed her to say I ain't beholden for none of her fast eye like she gave me back yonder." He didn't look at her, he looked at the blind man.

"What you mean?" she shouted. "I never gave you no fast eye. I only watch you tearing up that tract. He tore it up in little pieces," she said, pushing the blind man's shoulder. "He tore it up and sprinkled it over the ground like salt and wiped his hands on his pants."

"He followed me," the blind man said. "Wouldn't anybody follow you. I can hear the urge for Jesus in his voice."

"Jesus," Haze muttered, "my Jesus." He sat down by the girl's leg. His head was at her knee and he set his hand on the step next to her foot. She had on men's shoes and black cotton stockings. The shoes were laced up tight and tied in precise bows. She moved herself away roughly and sat down behind the blind man.

"Listen at his cursing," she said in a low tone. "He never followed you."

"Listen," the blind man said, "you can't run away from Jesus. Jesus is a fact. If who you're looking for is Jesus, the sound of it will be in your voice."

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"I don't hear nothing in his voice," Enoch Emery said. "I know a whole heap about Jesus because I attended thisyer Rodemill Boys' Bible Academy that a woman sent me to. If it was anything about Jesus in his voice I could certainly hear it." He had got up onto the lion's back and he was sitting there sideways cross-legged.

The blind man reached out again and his hands suddenly covered Haze's face. For a second Haze didn't move or make any sound. Then he knocked the hands off. "Quit it," he said in a faint voice. "You don't know nothing about me."

"You got a secret need," the blind man said. "Them that know Jesus once can't escape Him in the end."

"I ain't never known Him," Haze said.

"You got a least knowledge," the blind man said. "That's enough. You know His name and you're marked. If Jesus has marked you there ain't nothing you can do about it. Them that have knowledge can't swap it for ignorance." He was leaning forward but in the wrong direction so that he appeared to be talking to the step below Haze's foot. Haze sat leaning backward with the black hat tilted forward over his face.

"My daddy looks just like Jesus," Enoch said from the lion's back. "His hair hangs to his shoulders. Only difference is he's got a scar acrost his chin. I ain't never seen who my mother is."

"You're marked with knowlege," the blind man said. "You know what sin is and only them that know what it is can commit it. I knew all the time we were walking here somebody was following me," he said. "You couldn't have followed her. Wouldn't anybody follow her. I could feel there was somebody near with an urge for Jesus."

"There ain't nothing for your pain but Jesus," the girl said suddenly. She leaned forward and stuck her arm out with her finger pointed at Haze's shoulder, but he spat down the steps and didn't look at her. "Listen," she said in a louder voice, "this here man and woman killed this little baby. It was her own child but it was ugly and she never give it any love. This child had Jesus and this woman didn't have nothing but good looks and a man she was living in Sin with. She sent the child away and it come back and she sent it away again and it come back again and ever time she sent it away, it come back to where her and this man was living in Sin. They strangled it with a silk stocking and hung it up in the chimney. It didn't give her

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any peace after that, though. Everything she looked at was that child. Jesus made it beautiful to haunt her. She couldn't lie with that man without she saw it, staring through the chimney at her, shining through the brick in the middle of the night." She moved her feet around so that just the tips of them stuck out from her skirt which she had pulled tight around her legs. "She didn't have nothing but good looks," she said in the loud fast voice. "That ain't enough. No sirree."

"My Jesus," Haze said.

"It ain't enough," she repeated.

"I hear them scraping their feet inside there," the blind man said. "Get out the tracts, they're fixing to come out."

"What we gonna do?" Enoch asked. "What's inside theter building?"

"A program letting out," the blind man said. The child took the tracts out the gunny sack and gave him two bunches of them, tied with a string. "You and Enoch Emery go over on that side and give out," he said to her. "Me and this boy'll stay over here."

"He don't have no business touching them," she said. "He don't want to do nothing but shred them up."

"Go like I told you," the blind man said.

She stood there a second, scowling. Then she said, "You come on if you're coming," to Enoch Emery and Enoch jumped off the lion and followed her over to the other side.

The blind man was reaching forward. Haze ducked to the side but the blind man was next to him on the step with his hand clamped around his arm. He leaned forward so that he was facing Haze's knee and he said in a fast whisper, "You followed me here because you're in Sin but you can be a testament to the Lord. Repent! Go to the head of the stairs and renounce your sins and distribute these tracts to the people," and he thrust the stack of pamphlets into Haze's hand.

Haze jerked his arm away but he only pulled the blind man nearer. "Listen," he said, "I'm as clean as you are."

"Fornication," the blind man said.

"That ain't nothing but a word," Haze said. "If I was in Sin I was in it before I ever committed any. Ain't no change come in me." He was trying to pry the fingers off from around his arm but the blind

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man kept wrapping them tighter. "I don't believe in Sin," he said. "Take your hand off me."

"You do," the blind man said, "you're marked."

"I ain't marked," Haze said, "I'm free."

"You're marked free," the blind man said. "Jesus loves you and you can't escape his mark. Go to the head of the stairs and. . . . "

Haze jerked his arm free and jumped up. "I'll take them up there and throw them over into the bushes," he said. "You be looking! See can you see."

"I can see more than you!" the blind man shouted. "You got eyes and see not, ears and hear not, but Jesus'll make you see!"

"You be watching if you can see!" Haze said, and started running up the steps. People were already coming out the auditorium doors and some were half way down the steps. He pushed through them with his elbows out like sharp wings and when he got to the top, a new surge of them pushed him back almost to where he had started up. He fought through them again until somebody hollered, "Make room for this idiot!" and people got out of his way. He rushed to the top and pushed his way over to the side and stood there, glaring and panting.

"I never followed him," he said aloud. "I wouldn't follow a blind fool like that. My Jesus." He stood against the building, holding the stack of leaflets by the string. A fat man stopped near him to light a cigar, and Haze pushed his shoulder. "Look down yonder," he said. "See that blind man down there, he's giving out tracts. Jesus. You ought to see him and he's got this here ugly child dressed up in woman's clothes, giving them out too. My Jesus."

"There's always fanatics," the fat man said, moving on.

"My Jesus," Haze said. He leaned forward near an old woman with orange hair and a collar of red wooden beads. "You better get on the other side, lady," he said. "There's a fool down there giving out tracts." The crowd behind the old woman pushed her on, but she looked at him for an instant with two bright flea eyes. He started toward her through the people but she was already too far away, and he pushed back to where he had been standing against the wall. "Sweet Jesus Christ crucified," he said, and felt something turn in his chest. The crowd was moving fast. It was like a big spread ravelling and the separate threads disappeared down the dark streets until

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there was nothing left of it and he was standing on the porch of the auditorium by himself. The tracts were speckled all over the steps and on the sidewalk and out into the street. The blind man was standing down on the first step, bent over, feeling for the crumpled pamphlets scattered around him. Enoch Emery was over on the other side, standing on the lion's head and trying to balance himself, and the child was picking up the pamphlets that were not too crushed to use again and putting them back in the gunny sack.

I don't need no Jesus, Haze said. I don't need no Jesus. I got Leora Watts.

He ran down the steps to where the blind man was, and stopped. He stood there a second just out of reach of his hands which had begun to grope forward, hunting the sound of his step, and then he started across the street. He was on the other side before the voice pierced after him. He turned and saw the blind man standing in the middle of the street, shouting, "Shrike! Shrike! My name is Asa Shrike when you want me!" A car had to swerve to the side to keep from hitting him.

Haze drew his head down nearer his hunched shoulders and went on quickly. He didn't look back until he heard the footsteps coming behind him.

"Now that we got shut of them," Enoch Emery panted, "whyn't we go somewher and have us some fun?"

"Listen," Haze said roughly, "I got business of my own. I seen all of you I want." He began walking very fast.

Enoch kept skipping steps to keep up. "I been here two months," he said, "and I don't know nobody. People ain't friendly here. I got me a room and there ain't never nobody in it but me. My daddy said I had to come. I wouldn't never have come but he made me. I think I seen you sommers before. You ain't from Stockwell, are you?"

"No."

"Melsy?"

"No."

"Sawmill set up there oncet," Enoch said. "Look like you had a kind of familer face."

They walked on without saying anything until they got on the main street again. It was almost deserted. "Goodby," Haze said and quickened his walk again.

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"I'm going thisaway too," Enoch said in a sullen voice. On the left there was a movie house where the electric bill was being changed. "We hadn't got tied up with them hicks, we could have gone to a show," he muttered. He strode along at Haze's elbow, talking in a half mumble, half whine. Once he caught at his sleeve to slow him down and Haze jerked it away. "He made me come," he said in a cracked voice. Haze looked at him and saw he was crying, his face seamed and wet and a purple-pink color. "I ain't but eighteen year," he cried, "and he made me come and I don't know nobody, nobody here'll have nothing to do with nobody else. They ain't friendly. He done gone off with a woman and made me come but she ain't gonna stay for long, he's gonna beat hell out of her before she gets herself stuck to a chair. You the first familer face I seen in two months, I seen you sommers before. I know I seen you sommers before."

Haze looked straight ahead with his face set hard, and Enoch kept up the half mumble, half blubber. They passed a church and a hotel and an antique shop and turned up a street full of brick houses, each alike in the darkness.

"If you want you a woman you don't have to be follerin nothing looked like her," Enoch said. "I heard about where there's a house full of two-dollar ones. Whyn't we go have us some fun? I could pay you back next week."

"Look," Haze said, "I'm going where I stay—two doors from here. I got a woman. I got a woman, you understand? I don't need to go with you."

"I could pay you back next week," Enoch said. "I work at the city zoo. I guard a gate and I get paid ever week."

"Get away from me," Haze said.

"People ain't friendly here. You ain't from here but you ain't friendly neither."

Haze didn't answer him. He went on with his neck drawn close to his shoulder blades as if he were cold.

"You don't know nobody neither," Enoch said. "You ain't got no woman or nothing to do. I knew when I first seen you you didn't have nobody or nothing. I seen you and I knew it."

"This is where I live," Haze said, and he turned up the walk of the house without looking back at Enoch.

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Enoch stopped. "Yeah," he cried, "oh yeah," and he ran his sleeve under his nose to stop the snivel. "Yeah," he cried. "Go on where you goin but looker here." He slapped at his pocket and ran up and caught Haze's sleeve and rattled the peeler box at him. "She give me this. She give it to me and there ain't nothing you can do about it. She invited me to come to see them and not you and it was you follerin them." His eyes glinted through his tears and his face stretched in an evil crooked grin.

Haze's mouth jerked but he didn't say anything. He stood there for an instant, small in the middle of the steps, and then he raised his arm and hurled the stack of tracts he had been carrying. It hit Enoch in the chest and knocked his mouth open. He stood looking, with his mouth hanging open, at where it had hit his front, and then he turned and tore off down the street; and Haze went into the house.

The night before was the first time he had slept with Leora Watts or any woman, and he had not been very successful with her. When he finished, he was like something washed ashore on her, and she had made obscene comments about him, which he remembered gradually during the day. He was uneasy in the thought of going to her again. He didn't know what she would say when she opened the door and saw him there.

When she opened the door and saw him there, she said, "Ha ha." She was a big blonde woman with a green nightgown on. "What do YOU want?" she said.

He put his face into what he thought was an all-knowing expression but it was only stretched a little on one side. The black wool hat sat on his head squarely. Leora left the door open and went back to the bed. He came in with his hat on and when it knocked the sacked electric lightbulb, he took it off. Leora rested her face on her hand and watched him. He began to move around the room, examining this and that. His throat got dryer and his heart began to grip him like a little ape clutching the bars of its cage. He sat down on the edge of her bed, with his hat in his hand.

Leora's eyes had narrowed some and her mouth had widened and got thin as a knife blade. "That Jesus-seeing hat!" she said. She sat up and pulled her nightgown from under her and took it off. She reached for his hat and put it on her head and sat with her hands on her hips, watching him. Haze stared blank-faced for a minute, then he

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made three quick noises that were laughs. He jumped for the electric light cord and undressed in the dark.

Once when he was small, his father took him and his sister, Ruby, to a carnival that stopped in Melsy. There was one tent that cost more money, a little off to the side. A dried-up man with a horn voice was barking it. He never said what was inside. He said it was so SINsational that it would cost any man wanted to see it thirty-five cents, and it was so EXclusive, only fifteen could get in at a time. His father sent him and Ruby to a tent where two monkeys danced, and then he made for it, moving shuttle-faced and close to the walls of things, like he moved. Haze left the monkeys and followed him, but he didn't have thirty-five cents. He asked the barker what was inside.

"Beat it," the man said, "there ain't no pop and there ain't no monkeys."

"I already seen them," he said.

"That's fine," the man said, "beat it."

"I got fifteen cents," he said. "Whyn't you lemme in and I could see half of it." It's something about a privy, he was thinking. It's some men in a privy. Then he thought, maybe it's a man and a woman in a privy. She wouldn't want me in there. "I got fifteen cents," he said.

"It's more than half over," the man said, fanning with his straw hat. "You run along."

"That'll be fifteen cents worth then," Haze said.

"Scram," the man said.

"Is it a nigger?" Haze asked. "Are they doing something to a nigger?"

The man leaned off his platform and his dried-up face drew into a glare. "Where'd you get that idear?" he said.

"I don't know," Haze said.

"How old are you?" the man asked.

"Twelve," Haze said. He was ten.

"Gimme that fifteen cents," the man said, "and get in there."

He slid the money on the platform and scrambled to get in before it was over. He went through the flap of the tent and inside there was another tent and he went through that. His face was hot through to the back of his head. All he could see were the backs of the men. He climbed up on a bench and looked over their heads. They were looking down into a lowered place where something white was lying,

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squirming a little, in a box lined with black cloth. For a second he thought it was a skinned animal and then he saw it was a woman. She was fat and she had a face like an ordinary woman except there was a mole on the corner of her lip, that moved when she grinned, and one on her side, that was moving too. Haze's head became so heavy he couldn't turn it away from her.

"Had one of themther built in ever casket," his father, up toward the front, said, "be a heap ready to go sooner."

He recognized the voice without looking. He fell down off the bench and scrambled out the tent. He crawled out under the side of the outside one because he didn't want to pass the barker. He got in the back of a truck and sat down in the far corner of it. The carnival was making a tin roar outside.

His mother was standing by the washpot in the yard, looking at him, when he got home. She wore black all the time and her dresses were longer than other women's. She was standing there straight, looking at him. He slid behind a tree and got out of her view, but in a few minutes, he could feel her watching him through the tree. He saw the lowered place and the casket again and a thin woman in the casket who was too long for it. Her head stuck up at one end and her knees were raised to make her fit. She had a cross-shaped face and hair pulled close to her head, and she was twisting and trying to cover herself while the men looked down. He stood flat against the tree, dry-throated. She left the washpot and come toward him with a stick. She said, "What you seen?"

"What you seen?" she said.

"What you seen?" she said, using the same tone of voice all the time. She hit him across the legs with the stick, but he was like part of the tree. "Jesus died to redeem you," she said.

"I never ast Him," he muttered.

She didn't hit him again but she stood looking at him, shut-mouthed, and he forgot the guilt of the tent for the nameless unplaced guilt that was in him. In a minute she threw the stick away from her and went back to the washpot, shut-mouthed.

The next day he took his shoes in secret out into the woods. He never wore them except for revivals and in winter. He took them out the box and filled the bottoms of them with stones and small rocks and then he put them on. He laced them up tight and walked in them

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through the woods what he knew to be a mile, until he came to a creek, and then he sat down and took them off and eased his feet in the wet sand. He thought, that ought to satisfy Him. Nothing happened. If a stone had fallen he would have taken it for a sign. After a while he drew his feet out the sand and let them dry, and then he put the shoes on again with the rocks still in them and he walked a half mile back before he took them off.

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Allen Tate

OUR COUSIN, MR. POE*

When I was about fourteen there were in our house, along with the novels of John Esten Cooke, E. P. Roe, and Augusta Evans, three small volumes of Edgar Allan Poe. That, by my reckoning, was a long time ago. Even then the books were old and worn, whether from use (I suppose not) or from neglect, it did not occur to me to inquire. I remember, or imagine I remember the binding, which was blue, and the size, which was small, and the paper, which was yellow and very thin. One volume contained the Poems, prefaced by Lowell's famous "biography." In this volume I am sure, for I read it more than the others, was the well-known asymmetrical photograph, which I gazed at by the hour and which I hoped that I should some day resemble. Another volume contained most, or at least the most famous of the Tales: "Ligeia," which I liked best (I learned in due time that Poe had, too); "Morella" and "William Wilson," which I now like best; and "The Fall of the House of Usher," which was a little spoiled for me even at fourteen by the interjection of the "Mad Tryst of Sir Launcelot Canning." Perhaps it was in this volume that I admired "Marginalia," the first "criticism" I remember reading; but I did not discern either the bogus erudition or the sense of high literature which Poe was the first American to distinguish from entertainment and self-improvement through books; the merits as well as the defects went over my head. "Marginalia" could not at any rate have been in the third volume, which was given to a single long work: *Eureka —A Prose Poem*. This astrophilosophical discourse, which the late

* Address delivered before the Poe Society of Baltimore on the centenary of his death, October 7, 1949; and repeated as a Bergen Lecture at Yale University, November 14, 1949

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Paul Valéry took more seriously than any English or American critic ever did, fell in with my readings in popular astronomical books. In the backyard I arranged in a straight line peas, cherries, and oranges, in the proportionate sizes and distances of the sun and planets, and some hundreds of feet away (an inch perhaps to a thousand light-years) an old volley ball of my elder brothers' to represent Alpha Lyrae.

Later, on another occasion, I expect to examine *Eureka* at length, as I read it now, not as I read it at fourteen; yet before I leave it I must mention two other circumstances of my boyhood reading and the feeling that accompanied it. It lives for me as no later experience of ideas lives, because it was the first I had. The "proposition" that Poe undertook to demonstrate has come back to me at intervals in the past thirty-six years with such unpredictable force that now I face it with mingled resignation and dismay. I can say it without looking it up:

In the original unity of the first thing lies the secondary cause of all things, with the germ of their inevitable annihilation.

This is not the place to try to say what Poe meant by it. I could not, at fourteen, have guessed what it meant even after I had read the book; yet it is a fact of my boyhood (which I cannot suppose unique) that this grandiose formula for cosmic cataclysm became a part of my consciousness through no effort of my own but seemed to come to me like a dream, and came back later, like a nursery rhyme, or a tag from a popular song, unbidden.

The other circumstance I am surer of because it was a visible fact, a signature in faded brown ink on the fly-leaf of *Eureka*: it told me years later that the three volumes had been printed earlier than 1870, the year the man who had owned them died. He was my great-grandfather. My mother had said, often enough, or on some occasion that fixed it in memory, that her grandfather had "known Mr. Poe." (She was of the era when all eminent men, living or recently dead, were "Mr.") I knew as a boy that my great-grandfather had been a "poet," and in 1930 I found some of his poems, which I forbear to discuss. He had for a while been editor of the *Alexandria Gazette* at about the time of Mr. Poe's death. Both were "Virginians," though Virginians of somewhat different schools and points of view. I

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can see my great-grandfather in Poe's description of a preacher who called upon him in the summer of 1848: "He stood smiling and bowing at the madman Poe."

I have brought together these scattered memories of my first reading of a serious writer because in discussing any writer, or in coming to terms with him, we must avoid the trap of mere abstract evaluation, and try to reproduce the actual conditions of our relation to him. It would be difficult for me to take Poe up, "study" him, and proceed to a critical judgment. One may give these affairs the look of method, and thus deceive almost everybody but oneself. In reading Poe we are not brought up against a large, articulate scheme of experience, such as we see adumbrated in Hawthorne or Melville, which we may partly sever from personal association, both in the writer and in ourselves. Poe surrounds us with Eliot's "wilderness of mirrors," in which we see a subliminal self endlessly repeated or, turning, a new posture of the same figure. It is not too harsh, I think, to say that it is stupid to suppose that by "evaluating" this forlorn demon in the glass, we dispose of him. For Americans, perhaps for most modern men, he is with us like a dejected cousin: we may "place" him but we may not exclude him from our board. This is the recognition of a relationship, almost of the blood, which we must in honor acknowledge: what destroyed him is potentially destructive of us. Not only this; we must acknowledge another obligation, if, like most men of my generation, we were brought up in houses where the works of Poe took their easy place on the shelf with the family Shakespeare and the early novels of Ellen Glasgow. This is the obligation of loyalty to one's experience: he was in our lives and we cannot pretend that he was not. Not even Poe's great power in Europe is quite so indicative of his peculiar "place" as his unquestioned, if unexamined, acceptance among ordinary gentle people whose literary culture was not highly developed. The horrors of Poe created not a tremor in the bosoms of young ladies or a moment's anxiety in the eyes of vigilant mothers. I suppose the gentlemen of the South did not read him much after his time; in his time, they could scarcely have got the full sweep and depth of the horror. Nothing that Mr. Poe wrote, it was said soon after his death, could bring a blush to the cheek of the purest maiden.

But I doubt that maidens read very far in the Tales. If they had they would have found nothing to disconcert the image that Miss

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Susan Ingram recorded from a visit of Poe to her family a few weeks before his death:

> Although I was only a slip of a girl and he what seemed to me then quite an old man, and a great literary one at that, we got on together beautifully. He was one of the most courteous gentlemen I have ever seen, and that gave great charm to his manner. None of his pictures that I have ever seen look like the picture of Poe that I keep in my memory . . . there was something in his face that is in none of them. Perhaps it was in the eyes.

If he was a madman he was also a gentleman. Whether or not we accept Mr. Krutch's theory, we know, as this sensible young lady knew, that she was quite safe with him. A gentleman? Well, his manners were exemplary (when he was not drinking) and to the casual eye at any rate his exalted idealization of Woman (even of some very foolish women) was only a little more humorless, because more intense, than the standard cult of Female Purity in the Old South.

What Mr. Poe on his own had done with the cult it was not possible then to know. A gentleman and a Southerner, he was not quite, perhaps, a Southern gentleman. The lofty intellect of Ligeia, of Madeline, of Berenice, or of Eleanora, had little utility in the social and economic structure of Virginia, which had to be perpetuated through the issue of the female body, while the intellect, which was public and political, remained under the supervision of the gentlemen. Although Morella had a child (Poe's only heroine, I believe, to be so compromised), she was scarcely better equipped than Virginia Clemm herself to sustain more than the immaculate half of the vocation of the Southern lady. "But the fires," writes Morella's narrator-husband, "were not of Eros." And we know, at the end of the story, that the daughter is no real daughter but, as Morella's empty "tomb" reveals, Morella herself come back as a vampire to wreak upon her "lover" the vengeance due him. Why is it due him? Because, quite plainly, the lover lacked, as he always lacked with his other heroines, the "fires of Eros." The soul of Morella's husband "burns with fires it had never before known . . . and bitter and tormenting to my spirit was the gradual conviction that I could in no manner define their unusual meaning, or regulate their vague intensity." Perhaps in the soul of John Randolph alone of Virginia gentlemen

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strange fires burned. The fires that were not of Eros were generally for the land and oratory, and the two fires were predictably regulated.

Poe's strange fire is his leading symbol, but there is not space in an essay to list all its appearances. You will see it in the eye of the Raven; in "an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison," of Roderick Usher; in the burning eye of the old man in "The Tell-Tale Heart"; in "Those eyes! those large, those shining, those divine orbs," of the Lady Ligeia. Poe's heroes and heroines are always burning with a hard, gem-like flame—a bodyless exaltation of spirit that Poe himself seems to have carried into the drawing-room, where its limited visibility was sufficient guarantee of gentlemanly behavior. But privately, and thus, for him, publicly, in his stories, he could not "regulate its vague intensity."

I cannot go into this mystery here as fully as I should like; yet I may, I think, ask a question: Why did not Poe use explicitly the universal legend of the vampire? Perhaps some instinct for aesthetic distance made him recoil from it; perhaps the literal, business-like way the vampire went about making its living revolted the "ideality" of Poe. At any rate D. H. Lawrence was no doubt right in describing as vampires his women characters; the men, soon to join them as "undead," have, by some defect of the moral will, made them so.

The mysterious exaltation of spirit which is invariably the unique distinction of his heroes and heroines is not quite, as I have represented it, bodyless. *It inhabits a human body but that body is dead. The spirits prey upon one another with destructive fire which is at once pure of lust and infernal.* All Poe's characters represent one degree or another in a movement towards an archetypal condition: the survival of the soul in a dead body; but only in "The Facts in the Case of Monsieur Valdemar" is the obsessive subject explicit.

In none of the nineteenth-century comment on "The Fall of the House of Usher" that I have read, and in none of our own period, is there a feeling of shock, or even of surprise, that Roderick Usher is in love with his sister: the relation not being physical, it is "pure." R. H. Stoddard, the least sympathetic of the serious early biographers, disliked Poe's morbidity, but admitted his purity. The American case against Poe, until the first World War, rested upon his moral indifference, or his limited moral range. The range is limited, but there is no indifference; there is rather a compulsive, even a profound, in-

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terest in a moral problem of universal concern. His contemporaries could see in the love stories neither the incestuous theme nor what it meant, because it was not represented literally. The theme and its meaning as I see them are unmistakable: the symbolic compulsion that drives through, and beyond, physical incest moves towards the extinction of the beloved's will in complete possession, not of her body, but of her being; there is the reciprocal force, returning upon the lover, of self-destruction. Lawrence shrewdly perceived the significance of Poe's obsession with incestuous love. Two persons of the least dissimilarity offer the least physical resistance to mutual participation in the *fire* of a common being. Poe's most casual reader perceives that his lovers never do anything but contemplate each other, or pore upon the rigmarole of preposterously erudite, ancient books, most of which never existed. They are living in each other's insides, in the hollows of which burns the fire of will and intellect.

The fire is a double symbol; it lights and it burns. It is overtly the "light" of reason but as action it becomes the consuming fire of the abstract intellect, without moral significance, which invades the being of the beloved. It is the fire that, having illuminated, next destroys. Lawrence is again right in singling out for the burden of his insight the epigraph to "Ligeia," which Poe had quoted from Glanvill: "Man does not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save through the weakness of his own feeble will." Why do these women of monstrous will and intellect turn into vampires? Because, according to Lawrence, the lovers have not subdued them through the body to the biological level, at which sanity alone is possible, and they retaliate by devouring their men. This view is perhaps only partly right. I suspect that the destruction works both ways, that the typical situation in Poe is more complex than Lawrence's version of it.

If we glance at "The Fall of the House of Usher" we shall be struck by a singular feature of the catastrophe. Bear in mind that Roderick and Madeline are brother and sister, and that the standard hyperaesthesia of the Poe hero acquires in Roderick a sharper reality than in any of the others, except perhaps William Wilson. His naked sensitivity to sound and light is not "regulated" to the forms of the human situation; it is a mechanism operating apart from the moral consciousness. We have here something like a capacity for mere sensation, as distinguished from sensibility, which in Usher is atro-

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phied. In terms of the small distinction that I am offering here, sensibility keeps us in the world; sensation locks us into the self, feeding upon the disintegration of its objects and absorbing them into the void of the ego. The lover, circumventing the body into the secret being of the beloved, tries to convert the spiritual object into an object of sensation: the intellect which knows and the will which possesses are unnaturally turned upon that part of the beloved which should remain inviolate.

As the story of Usher opens, the Lady Madeline is suffering from a strange illness. She dies. Her brother has, of course, possessed her inner being, and killed her; or thinks he has, or at any rate wishes to think that she is dead. This is all a little vague: perhaps he has deliberately entombed her alive, so that she will die by suffocation—a symbolic action for extinction of being. Why has he committed this monstrous crime? Sister though she is, she is nevertheless not entirely identical with him: she has her own otherness, of however slight degree, resisting his hypertrophied will. He puts her alive, though "cataleptic," into the "tomb." (Poe never uses graves, only tombs, except in "Premature Burial." His corpses, being half dead, are thus only half buried; they rise and walk again.) After some days Madeline breaks out of the tomb and confronts her brother in her bloody cerements. This is the way Poe presents the scene:

" . . . Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footsteps on the stair? Do I not distinguish the heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!"—here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in his effort he were giving up his soul—*"Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!"*

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell, the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there *did* stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the Lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

Madeline, back from the tomb, neither dead nor alive, is in the mid-

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dle state of the unquiet spirit of the vampire, whose heart-beats are "heavy and horrible." There is no evidence that Poe knew any anthropology; yet in some legends of vampirism the undead has a sluggish pulse, or none at all. In falling prone upon her brother she takes the position of the vampire suffocating its victim in a sexual embrace. By these observations I do not suggest that Poe was conscious of what he was doing; had he been, he might have done it even worse. I am not saying, in other words, that Poe is offering us, in the Lady Madeline, a vampire according to Bram Stoker's specifications. An imagination of any power at all will often project its deepest assumptions about life in symbols that duplicate, without the artist's knowledge, certain meanings, the origins of which are sometimes as old as the race. If a writer ambiguously exalts the "spirit" over the "body," and the spirit must live wholly upon another spirit, some version of the vampire legend is likely to issue as the symbolic situation.

Although the action is reported by a narrator, the fictional point of view is that of Usher: it is all seen through his eyes. But has Madeline herself not also been moving towards the cataclysmic end in the enveloping action outside the frame of the story? Has not her *will to know* done its reciprocal work upon the inner being of her brother? Their very birth had violated their unity of being. They must achieve spiritual identity in mutual destruction. The physical symbolism of the fissured house, of the miasmic air, and of the special order of nature surrounding the House of Usher and conforming to the laws of the spirits inhabiting it—all this supports the central dramatic situation, which moves towards spiritual unity through disintegration.

In the original unity of the first thing lies the secondary cause of all things, with the germ of their inevitable annihilation.

Repeated here, in the context of the recurrent subject of the Tales, the thesis of *Eureka* has a sufficient meaning and acquires something of the dignity that Valéry attributed to it. Professor Quinn adduces quotations from mathematical physicists to prove that Poe, in *Eureka,* was a prophet of science. It is a subject on which I am not entitled to an opinion. But even if Professor Quinn is right, the claim is irrelevant, and is only another version of the attempt today to make religion and the arts respectable by showing that they are

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semi-scientific. Another sort of conjecture seems to me more profitable: that in the history of the moral imagination in the nineteenth century Poe occupies a special place. No other writer in England or the United States, or, so far as I know, in France, went so far as Poe in his vision of dehumanized man.

His characters are, in the words of William Wilson's double, "dead to the world"; they are machines of sensation and will, with correspondences, in the physical universe, of particles and energy. Poe's engrossing obsession in *Eureka* with the cosmic destiny of man issued in a quasi-cosmology, a more suitable extension of his vision than any mythology, home-made or traditional, could have offered him. The great mythologies are populous worlds, but a cosmology need have nobody in it. In Poe's, the hyperaesthetic egoist has put all other men into his void: he is alone in the world, and thus dead to it. If we place Poe against the complete Christian imagination of Dante, whom he resembles in his insistence upon a cosmic extension of the moral predicament, the limits of his range are apparent, and the extent of his insight within those limits. The quality of Poe's imagination can be located, as I see it, in only two places in Dante's entire scheme of the after-life: Cantos XIII and XXXII of the *Inferno*. In Canto XIII, the Harpies feed upon the living trees enclosing the shades of suicides—those "violent against themselves," who will not resume their bodies at the Resurrection, for "man may not have what he takes from himself." In XXXII, we are in Caïna, the ninth circle, where traitors to their kin lie half buried in ice, up to the pubic shadow—"where the doleful shades were . . . sounding with their teeth like storks." Unmotivated treachery, for the mere intent of injury, and self-violence are Poe's obsessive subjects. He has neither Purgatory nor Heaven; and only two stations in Hell.

Let us turn briefly to the question of Poe's style. He has several styles, and it is not possible to damn them all at once. The critical style, which I shall not be able to examine here, is on occasion the best; he is a lucid and dispassionate expositor, he is capable of clear and rigorous logic (even from mistaken premises, as in "The Rationale of Verse"), when he is not warped by envy or the desire to flatter. He is most judicial with his peers, least with his inferiors, whom he either overestimates or wipes out. As for the fictional style, it too, varies; it is perhaps at its sustained best, in point of sobriety and restraint,

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in the tales of deduction. Exceptions to this observation are "Descent into the Maelström," "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," and perhaps one or two others in a *genre* which stems from the eighteenth century "voyage." These fictions demanded a Defoe-like verisimilitude which was apparently beyond his reach when he dealt with his obsessive theme. Again I must make an exception: "William Wilson," one of the serious stories (by serious, I mean an ample treatment of the obsession), is perspicuous in diction and on the whole credible in realistic detail. I quote a paragraph:

> The extensive enclosure was irregular in form, having many capacious recesses. Of these, three or four of the largest constituted the play-ground. It was level, and covered with a hard fine gravel. I well remember it had no trees, nor benches, nor anything similar within it. Of course it was in the rear of the house. In front lay a small parterre, planted with box and other shrubs, but through this sacred division we passed only upon rare occasions indeed—such as a first advent to school or a final departure hence, or perhaps, when a parent or a friend having called upon us, we joyfully took our way home for the Christmas or midsummer holidays.

It is scarcely great prose, but it has an eighteenth-century directness, and even elegance, of which Poe was seldom capable in his stories. I surmise that the playground at Dr. Bransby's school at Stoke-Newington, where, as a child, he was enrolled for five years recalled one of the few periods of his life which he could detach from the disasters of manhood and face with equanimity. Now a part of the description of the Lady Ligeia:

> . . . I examined the contour of the lofty and pale forehead—it was faultless—how cold indeed that word when applied to a majesty so divine!—the skin rivalling the purest ivory, the commanding extent and repose, the gentle prominence of the regions above the temples; and the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant, the naturally curling tresses, setting forth the full force of the Homeric epithet, "hyacinthine." I looked at the delicate outline of the nose. . . .

But I refrain. It is easy enough to agree with Aldous Huxley and Yvor Winters, and dismiss this sort of ungrammatical rubbish as too cheap, or even too idiotic, to reward the time it takes to point it out. But if Poe is worth understanding at all (I assume that he is), we might begin by asking why the writer of the lucid if not very distinguished passage from "William Wilson" repeatedly fell into the

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bathos of "Ligeia." I confess that Poe's serious style at its typical worst makes the reading of more than one story at a sitting an almost insuperable task. The Gothic glooms, the Venetian interiors, the ancient wine-cellars (from which nobody ever enjoys a vintage but always drinks "deep")—all this, done up in a glutinous prose, so fatigues one's attention that with the best will in the world one gives up, unless one gets a clue to the power underlying the flummery.

I have tried in the course of these remarks to point in the direction in which the clue, as I see it, is to be found. I do not see it in the influence of the Gothic novel. This was no doubt there; but no man is going to use so much neo-Gothic, over and over again, unless he means business with it; I think that Poe meant business. If the Gothic influence had not been to hand, he would have invented it, or something equally "unreal" to serve his purpose. His purpose in laying on the thick décor was to simulate sensation. Poe's sensibility, for reasons that I cannot surmise here, was almost completely impoverished. He could feel little but the pressure of his predicament, and his perceptual powers remained undeveloped. Very rarely he gives us a real perception because he is not interested in anything that is alive. Everything in Poe is dead: the houses, the rooms, the furniture, to say nothing of nature and of human beings. He is like a child—all appetite without sensibility; but to be in manhood all appetite, all will, without sensibility, is to be a monster: to feed spiritually upon men without sharing with them a real world is spiritual vampirism. The description of Ligeia's head is that of a dead woman.

Does it explain anything to say that this is necrophilism? I think not. Poe's prose style, as well as certain qualities of his verse,* expresses the kind of "reality" to which he had access: I believe I have indicated that it is a reality sufficiently terrible. In spite of an early classical education and a Christian upbringing, he wrote as if the experience of these traditions had been lost: he was well ahead of

* I expect to examine Poe's verse on another occasion. It may be remarked that his verse rhythms are for the metronome, not the human ear. Its real defects are so great that it is not necessary to invent others, as Mr. T. S. Eliot seems to do in "From Poe to Valéry" (The Hudson Review, Autumn, 1949). Thus Mr. Eliot (and I cite only one of his observations that seem to me wrong) complains that "the saintly days of yore" could not be an appropriate time for the Raven to have lived. Elijah was fed by Ravens, a bird which was almost extinct in America in the 1840's. Ravens frequently fed hermits and saints and were in fact a fairly standard feature of saintly equipment.

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his time. He could not relate his special reality to a wider context of insights—a discipline that might have disciplined his prose. From the literary point of view he combined the primitive and the decadent: primitive, because he had neither history nor the historical sense; decadent, because he was the conscious artist of an intensity which lacked moral perspective.

But writers tend to be what they are; I know of no way to make one kind into another. It may have been a condition of Poe's genius that his ignorance should have been what it was. If we read him as formal critics we shall be ready to see that it was another condition of his genius that he should never produce a poem or a story without blemishes, or a critical essay that, despite its acuteness in detail, does not evince provincialism of judgment and lack of knowledge. We must bear in mind Mr. Eliot's remark that Poe must be viewed as a whole. Even the fiction and the literary journalism that seem without value add to his massive impact upon the reader.

What that impact is today upon other readers I cannot pretend to know. It has been my limited task to set forth here a little of what one reader finds in him, and to acknowledge in his works the presence of an incentive (again, for one man) to self-knowledge. I do not hesitate to say that had Poe not written *Eureka,* I should have been able, a man of this age, myself to formulate a proposition of "inevitable annihilation." I can only invite others to a similar confession. Back of the preceding remarks lies an ambitious assumption, about the period in which we live, which I shall not make explicit. It is enough to say that, if the trappings of Poe's nightmare strike us as tawdry, we had better look to our own. That particular vision in its purity (Poe was very pure) is perhaps not capable of anything better than Mr. Poe's ludicrous décor. Nor have persons eating one another up and calling it spiritual love often achieved a distinguished style either in doing it or in writing about it. It was not Ugolino, it was Dante who wrote about Ugolino with more knowledge than Ugolino had. Mr. Poe tells us in one of his good poems that from boyhood he had "a demon in my view." Nobody then—my great-grandfather, my mother, three generations—believed him. It is time we did. I confess that his voice is so near that I recoil a little, lest he, Montressor, lead me into the cellar, address me as Fortunato, and wall me up alive. I should join his melancholy troupe of the undead, whose

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voices are surely as low and harsh as the grating teeth of storks. He is so close to me that I am sometimes tempted to enter the mists of pre-American genealogy to find out whether he may not actually be my cousin.

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Howard Nemerov

TO A FRIEND GONE TO FIGHT FOR THE KUOMINTANG

Not that, of course, you couldn't stick it out
—the cigarettes turned brown in coffee cups
And all suchlike our civil disciplines—

But that pity and hate overcame you
Where you slept in this wilderness of mind
So that wrestling, in the fixed match, seemed vain.

You be my conscience, then, and with my love
Fight what entrenched savagery you find,
Blest, if not by the angel, then by man,

Or if not by all men, yet blest of those
Who, undeceived in the strange Orient,
Would know the Harvard Club through all disguise.

But this, I see, is also vain. You know
In me a mind cancered (as you say) by
The worm I worship in the mystic rose,

Where, according to me, the blessed sit
In great humility, scratching their heads,
And pondering, according again to you,

The fathomless dialectic of the tide
But never speaking of the stinking fish
Whom the wave drives up but does not bring back

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—*Quae mundi plaga,* dear man? China? Rome?
No matter. As between the golden mean
And the meanness of gold, there is no matter.

Or has the argument somewhere gone wrong?
Might I be forced to conclude, you to doubt?
In the violent life, you know where you are.

You have permission, then, to use my name
And die under it for all the difference—
And that's enough. I'll keep your name alive

And teach school under it, or write a book;
But when things get hard on this backward front
And all of us redeem your dollar life,

Remember me. When the engines resonate
On the cold drome, and you hear their huge strength,
The strength is not yours, neither is the will;

But write me anyhow, and let me know:
Are there yet heroes? Do they wish to kill?
What is the will of the dead we dying do?

Weldon Kees

TESTIMONIES

Others at their porches . . .

I

"I baited bears and prayed. The Queen
Grew inky on Boethius. Between
The angels and the animals we lived and died.
The sun, the King, and my own being blazed as one.
I spoke occasionally to God."

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II

"I circumcise my son and laud
The Covenant. The massacres go on.
And now, plunder, expulsion. Poisoned fountains drown
The Synagogue. Blood stains the font;
The staff breaks toward the desert in my hands."

III

"I did not see the Grail. Sir John
Lay dying at the bridge. When barbers cut away
Those spongy growths from the poor soldiers' gums,
The whole camp echoed with our cries.
I place the cauldron of God's wrath upon the coals."

IV

"I watch the world contract to this
Gray winter Grub Street where the scavengers
Drop in the cold. The famine spreads more every day.
God save the King, the Army, and the House of Lords!
The rags fall from my arms outside the coffee-house."

V

"I live. The Elevated shudders to a stop
At Twenty-Eighth and Third. Among
The nuns and crippled Negroes, we descend
The stairway to the street, to red-cheeked chromo Christ,
Hung with the bloody calves' heads in the butcher shop."

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Jürgen von Kempski

THE COMMUNIST PALIMPSEST

Palimpsest: A parchment, tablet, etc., which has been used twice or three times, the earlier writing having been erased. WEBSTER

The *Communist Manifesto* which Marx and Engels flung into the face of the European bourgeoisie on the eve of the revolution of 1848, begins with the words: "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism." It declares that all past history has been a history of class struggles. It outlines the achievement of the bourgeoisie: in less than one hundred years of domination it had unleashed more stupendous productive forces than all previous classes lumped together: but bourgeois property relationships have become too narrow to encompass the wealth they have created. The weapons with which the bourgeoisie defeated feudalism are now being turned against itself. The bourgeoisie has even engendered the class that will wield these weapons—the modern workers, the proletariat. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of modern society can not rise up without shattering to bits the whole superstructure of classes constituting official society. The communists are merely the agents of the historical process in the stage of development characterized by the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Their ideas are only a general expression of actual conditions in an existing class struggle, in a historical process taking place before our eyes. Whither is this process leading? The old bourgeois society, with its classes and class contradictions will be replaced by an association in which the free development of every individual will be the condition for the free development of all. Therefore: "Workers of the world, unite!"

No party program could have been more dynamic, no program could have put forward a more grandiose conception of the historical

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situation, or insisted more resolutely on the consequences to be drawn from it, none could have charted the relentless course of history with greater assurance. And for these very reasons, no program could have stood in sharper contradiction to the real political situation in its own party, or could have replied so strikingly to the situation prevailing now, a century later: a spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of Communism.*

The *Communist Manifesto* is deserving of an analysis, not only because exactly a century has passed since its appearance, but because of its timeliness today. An analysis may help us to a better knowledge of our own situation; it may help to show us where we stand and perhaps what direction we should take.

Marx had a concrete vision of the future. This distinguished him from the communists of his day, who were full of the fantastic pipedreams of little men. It is fruitless to try to fit the actual events of the intervening hundred years into his vision. True political vision is not revealed through prophecy; a Marx is no Nostradamus; it is revealed by the changes it brings about, by its influence, by the reality it helps to create. This reality is with us, we find it in Russian Bolshevism, but also in the libertarian socialism of the Central and Western European variety. We must therefore inquire to what degree these two forms of socialism—we may equally well call them communism—correspond to the fundamental intention of the *Communist Manifesto*. But here a certain complication arises. Between modern socialism and the *Manifesto,* Marx's main work, *Capital* intervenes, and its relation to the *Manifesto* also requires clarification. And this is not all. There remains the question as to whether the fundamental intention of the *Manifesto* can be gleaned merely from the text which we have briefly outlined. The *Manifesto* grew out of a complex of historical circumstances. It is a code message which will reveal its inner meaning only under the closest scrutiny.

Communism of the Russian stamp, which likes to call itself

* *The Communist Manifesto* purports to "counter the fairy tale about the spectre of Communism with a party manifesto." These words are directed against Lorenz von Stein who in his book *The Socialism and Communism of Present Day France* had written: side by side with Saint-Simonism and Fourierism "stands Communism, a dark, menacing spectre, in whose reality no one wants to believe but whose existence everyone recognizes and fears." Here we cannot go into the influence of Stein's work on the development of Marx.

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Leninism-Stalinism, shows no hesitation in tracing its lineage to the work of Marx and Engels. It dominates the Communist parties of almost every country. We need not concern ourselves here with the "left" and "right" deviations, they have lost all significance. Nor is it of any great interest to speculate as to whether or to what degree the Stalinists are justified in calling themselves orthodox Marxists. The truth is that like almost all orthodoxies that claim to possess the spirit and the letter, they possess some element of both, and the official party interpretation furnishes the rest. This slavish orthodoxy would probably make the founding father hide his head in shame: for he was fully abreast of his times and if he lived today he would keep abreast of our times. What program he would advocate today, we do not know. Such questions are meaningless.

What is more difficult is to characterize the relation of present-day socialism to Marx. There are still socialists who claim to be carrying on the tradition of Marx. Modern socialism reveals little trace of the Marxian orthodoxy put forward by Kautsky, but the "Marxist" imprint on socialist thought, particularly in Germany, is still relatively important. In a certain sense one might even speak of a Marxist renaissance, especially in countries where formerly any real Marxism was almost unknown outside of the Communist parties. Yet in Germany we seldom find the theories of Marxism formulated as a coherent whole. Socialist theory, if we are still in any sense justified in speaking of it in the singular, is still very much discussed, but up until now no work has emerged that can be mentioned in the same breath as Marx's *Capital*.* A socialist may be tempted to say: we have Marx and various rough beginnings. But a critical observer might feel equally justified in saying that socialist theory is in process of dissolution.

Since the socialists lay the greatest stress on economic aims, let us discuss them first. From the economic standpoint there are three principal desiderata: full employment, stable currency, and free foreign trade. There is reason to suppose that of these three only two can be realized with any prospect of permanence. The socialists usually decide for full employment and stable currency. That Hitler made the same choice should give us food for thought. Between him and them

* There is one exception, the last book of Joseph A. Schumpeter: *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, New York, 1942.

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there is unquestionably a difference that can be summed up in the word socialization. The socialists want to socialize the economy. The Communists are in a great hurry to do so, the Social Democrats would like to limit themselves at first to certain sectors, the basic industries. Important as this difference is for today, it has no bearing on the ultimate goal. The socialist also envisages a state of complete socialization, even if he does not expect it in his lifetime. Under socialization, to be sure, very diverse things are meant: nationalization, the taking over of the factories by a public body, whether the state, the province, the municipality. Or the setting up of producers' cooperatives, in which the unions may play a leading role. These are subtle distinctions with which we need not concern ourselves. For the cooperatives are also conceived as semi-governmental organisms. What is far more important is that production should be governed by a general plan. Here too various stages of centralization, or decentralization, are conceivable, and these again need not be too much stressed. For the crucial factor in all these conceptions of a socialist economy is that economic life becomes an administrative function.

For practical purposes we already have a socialist economy in the legal economic life of Germany, that is, outside the black and gray markets. Raw materials and semi-manufactured products are allocated and rationed. Prices and wages are fixed, the consumer has his cards and tickets: the flow of commodities is controlled administratively. We know that our planned economy does not function, that anyone who wants to live is dependent on the black market and that the producer could not produce if he did not enter into off-the-record deals for raw materials, food for his workers, etc. But although the employers are not responsible for the debacle of our planned economy—the socialized industries like the railroad are specialists in these off-the-record deals—it would nevertheless be unfair to put the blame on "socialism" though it is permissible to believe that it cannot lead us out of our misery in an acceptable way, i.e. without the loss of our last remnant of freedom and without creating an economic upsurge by the pressure of bayonets.

On the other hand, conditions seem to be more favorable for socialism in the countries that were not gravely affected by the war, which were spared the devastations of Europe and most particularly Germany, let us say in the United States. How handsome a head,

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what a pity it's made of wood, writes Phaedrus in the fable. And of America we might say: how ripe for socialism, what a pity there are no socialists. The American economy is indeed ripe for socialism in the sense that it has attained such a degree of organization and technical perfection that it might be run by a bureaucratic apparatus without incurring any harm. If to this we compare our own condition, from which that of Western Europe seems to differ only in degree, the war has indeed greatly intensified the trends toward socialization. The war economy has ushered in a "planned" economy, but by the magnitude of its devastations, by its destruction of productive plants, the war has also largely destroyed our ripeness for socialization. To this must be added in Germany the smashing of the cartels and the breaking up of the trusts, measures which—except in the field of banking—are suitable for the revival of a "capitalist" economy, since they create an employer economy in the affected industries by destroying their unifying administrative apparatus. The question of ownership is for the present comparatively irrelevant. The importance that the socialists still ascribe to it is a residue of old ideologies and obsolete theories. For however this question is solved, whether in the form of joint-stock companies, state-subsidized foundations, semi-governmental organisms, municipal or state ownership, the one crucial question remains: should the inevitable liquidation of the present planned economy be followed by a return to a very limited free market economy as an emergency expedient, calculated to lead in the not too long run to a new planned economy, or should the return to a free market economy (though with an intensive regulation of the market) be our actual goal?

The core of the controversy between free market economy and planned economy is, to state it in popular terms: how can crises be prevented? In the economic history of the nineteenth and twentieth century a certain cyclic movement can be ascertained. Prosperity and depression have alternated with some regularity. The theoretical interpretation of this phenomenon is still controversial; it has become even harder to explain since economists beginning with Kondratieff discerned "long" cycles embracing several short ones. Be that as it may, it does not seem impossible today to combat and even to avoid depressions even in a free market economy. And it should not be supposed that the stability of an economy increases as its centrally planned and guided sector increases—on the contrary: the greater

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this sector becomes, the more difficult it becomes to right the disturbed balance of a private sector. If we take prosperity to mean full employment, which for the socialists is the prime consideration, we should not necessarily insist on the stability of the currency, that is, of real wages. There are other ways of reaching stability.*

In the light of present economic theory there is at all events no need of a "planned economy" to avoid crises. Quite aside from the fact that a planned economy is not secure against mismanagement, misjudgment, etc. It is trivial and insidious to say: if I have the necessary data and the necessary decree power, I can avert crises. Insidious because the implication is: give me the necessary decree power. This faith in the power of planning, the logical implication of which is faith in force, has gnawed its way deep into socialist thought. It is the counterpart to the socialists' profound distrust of the free market. Historically this distrust is perfectly understandable. Today, it seems to me, it is no longer justified, and the depression of the early thirties is no proof to the contrary. At most it proves mismanagement. And by and large, as M. J. Bonn stated at the time, the mismanagement which did occur in all crucial domains—was a matter not of theory but of "practice."

It is safe to say that from the standpoint of economic theory the contradiction between "socialism" and "capitalism" need not be irreconcilable, once traditional dogmas are discarded. Chief among such dogmas are certain economic conclusions drawn fifty or a hundred years ago, mostly from the work of Marx. If we wish to build up a new economy that is essentially a free market economy, there may still be good reasons for socializing certain industries. But this socialization must then take forms appropriate to the task in hand, for example, the state-subsidized foundation. To subject the industries in question to national or municipal ownership is neither necessary nor always desirable. It is not always economically desirable, because state and municipal interests may gain an influence on price policy; or politically desirable, because it is a poor idea to accumulate power wrested from private individuals in public hands. Other points may be left open to controversy, for if both sides take thorough inventory

* This point is made by Pfister in his impressive *Sozialpolitik als Krisenpolitik* (Social Policy as Crisis Policy), 1936.

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and throw obsolete dogmas overboard, the basis thus achieved will be broad enough to prevent the interplay between government and opposition from degenerating into a succession of fundamental crises.

II

Knut Wicksell once said that the European socialists had missed their great opportunity and thus forfeited their future. They should have drawn the logical conclusions from modern economic theory before this idea occurred to their bourgeois adversaries. A "scientific" socialist should develop the most essential quality of the scientific mind, an unlimited aptitude for unlearning obsolete ideas and learning new ones. As far as Germany is concerned, the opportunity does not seem to me to have passed, but unfortunately our socialists are more tied to dogma than elsewhere. It is not too difficult to show by what dogmas they destroy their possibilities. In the above, we have attempted to suggest some of these, and thus in a sense burned off the uppermost layer of writing on the Communist palimpsest. The next layer that confronts us is a compendious text dating from the second half of the nineteenth century. The main part of it is entitled: "Capital. A critique of political economy by Karl Marx." Let us examine certain parts of this text.

It is not hard to find statements by Marx about crises, some in *Capital,* some in other economic works, and a good many in his letters. We find sound observations, acute speculations, sketches of explanations, but all of these are not easily fitted together into a coherent theory of crises. "We find virtually all the elements that have ever been included in any serious analysis of business cycles, and on the whole very few mistakes. Moreover it should not be forgotten that merely to have perceived the existence of a cyclic movement was at that time a great achievement. . . . Marx, I believe, was the first economist . . . to anticipate the work of Clément Juglar. . . . This suffices to accord him a high rank among the precursors of modern research in business cycles." This judgment of an expert like Schumpeter means a good deal, but it requires a significant emendation, which Schumpeter himself later stressed. Even if we somehow coordinate Marx's utterances on the subject, his theory of crises—and in this case it by no means prejudices his accomplishment that one can

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speak of a "theory" only with grave reservations—does not follow from the "laws" of the capitalist process, whose discovery he—like his epigones—regarded as his real achievement. Nor does his theory of the collapse of the capitalist system follow from his theory of crises, any more than the factors which according to him would bring about this collapse, can be made responsible for the cyclic recurrence of depressions.

Moreover, Marx's theory of collapse does not follow from his theoretical premises. This was already recognized by Hilferding.* Again and again we find that the edifice erected by Marx contains too many flaws and deficiencies to be inhabitable by a modern socialist who makes serious demands on theory. In economic questions, only orthodox communists can content themselves with it, people who hope to solve the economic problem in practice by force and in theory by methods of philology. Nevertheless the work still offers ample interest today, although its foundation, particularly the labor theory of value, is questionable and the conclusions which Marx derives from it are untenable; and finally, although any attempt to bring it up to date would have to modify the theory of surplus value and thus deprive the work of its most impressive anti-capitalist point. (The source of capitalist profit is for Marx "surplus value," the difference between actual wages and natural wages, i.e. the wages that would result, other things being equal, if the economy were stationary and there were no monopolies. This "deduction" theory is not consistently applicable and is at all events no better than a "supplement theory," i.e., the assumption that surplus value comes into being because sales price is higher than "cost price." But if that is so we must drop the Marxist thesis that "exploitation" is implicit in the capitalist system.)

Not only does *Capital* (and Marx's work as a whole) include a number of observations, hypotheses, arguments, which more recent economic theory has justified or revived, even though the premises and proofs have radically changed—we have pointed to his pioneer work in the theory of crises—; but also taken as a whole, it constitutes the first and still the most significant attempt at a theory of economic development. He anticipated a goal which the historical school of

* In his *Finance Capital* (1910), perhaps the most significant work of the Marxist School.

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political economy had not seen so clearly. Today we can say that his means were not adequate and, given the scientific level of his times—could not be adequate to the solution of such a task, although he, very much in contrast to his epigones, completely mastered the economic science of his time, revealing with all his universal scope the passion for detail which characterizes the scientist.

But aside from all the pros and cons to which Marx's *Capital* so amply lends itself, the work cannot be said to provide a theoretical foundation for socialism. Its core, the labor theory of value, has nothing specifically socialist about it, and is in all essential respects derived from Ricardo. If we examine it more closely and disregard the accepted legend, we must perceive that socialist consequences do not follow from it. The method applied by Marx was that of the economists of his time, and despite the vast improvement in our analytical apparatus, present methodology still finds it unexceptionable. The occasional excursions into the language of dialectic by the Hegelian, who defended his master while addressing a generation which looked on him as a "dead dog," are purely on the surface; Marx's Hegelianism lives in his philosophy of history, not in his economics.

Let us therefore erase this layer of the Communist palimpsest. A new text emerges, a new handwriting is revealed. It is the handwriting of the *young Marx*.

III

The document that stands at the end of this period in Marx's life, which Marx himself in retrospect called his period of "intellectual orientation," is the *Communist Manifesto*. It is the culmination of a development embracing approximately a decade, beginning with the letter of November 1837 in which the law student announced his turn to philosophy. Philosophy, or rather the "grotesque siren's song" of the Hegelian philosophy, had cast its spell on the nineteen-year-old youth. The "orientation" which thus began led in the course of a few years to a new interpretation of history, historical materialism, and this in turn compelled him to take up political economy. He had just returned to a life of tranquility after the revolutionary turmoil of the March revolution and expected to complete

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this study in a few months. But soon it became clear to him that he had found his destiny. The thirty-odd years that were still before him did not suffice for the completion of his work.

If it is Marx the economist who speaks in *Capital,* it is the philosopher of history, the sociologist, who speaks in his early writing. He later boasted of having righted Hegel's dialectic, which had been standing on its head. But though it is true that he engaged in this activity, particularly in his critique of Hegel's philosophy of law, this formulation is a very drastic simplification of his intellectual processes during the years when he was growing to intellectual maturity.

It was not only Marx the economist who set his imprint upon socialism: to an even greater extent, it was the sociologist and philosopher of history. The thesis (formulated in 1859) that it is not man's consciousness that determines his existence, but conversely his social existence that determines his consciousness, has become a dogma. This dogma constitutes the basis of the hope that the change to socialist economic forms will not only benefit economic life, but even more important, will improve man himself, a hope that is still cherished even (one might say especially) by men who have abandoned strict Marxian economics, even (and particularly) by men who reject Marx's atheistic materialism in the name of religion and of ethics.

Historical materialism—and for this Engels is partly to blame—became as platitudinous as the materialism of Moleschott, except that instead of phosphorus-containing fat (which inspired Feuerbach's famous pun: *Der Mensch ist was er isst,* Man is what he eats), it is productive relations that produce ideas. Marx's early writings have nothing to do with such platitudes; they are concerned with the concept and reality of man's alienation. Since throughout history men have confronted one another not as men, but as members of classes, history has been the history of man's alienation—or, in the wording of the *Communist Manifesto,* the history of class struggles.

As is generally known, this interpretation of history goes back to Hegel* but it does not amount simply to Hegelianism with a

* The economic interpretation of the "estates," as Franz Rosenzweig remarked, is suggested in Hegel's late works. "Alienation" is a Hegelian term (while "self-alienation" was coined by Feuerbach).

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materialist twist. Such a twist had been effected by Feuerbach and we know that Marx (and Engels) had gone through the "Feuerbach" (fiery brook, a pun on Feuerbach's name), the "purgatory of the present," as Marx had called it in Ruge's *Anekdota,* published in 1843. But: "In so far as Feuerbach is a materialist, he does not take history into consideration, and in so far as he takes history into consideration, he is not a materialist. For him history and materialism are widely separated," write Marx and Engels in the chapter on Feuerbach in the *German Ideology.* Nevertheless, it was Feuerbach who for Marx and Engels opened the way from Hegel's spiritualistic metaphysic of history to "real" history. "Who set man in place of the old rubbish, even of the human self-consciousness! Feuerbach and only Feuerbach," writes Marx in *The Holy Family.*

But Feuerbach's failure to encompass history merely reveals the historic core of Hegel's metaphysic of history; Feuerbach's man who is what he eats has no more history than the Hegelian idea. There is a good bit of theology in this "idea"; it is another word for God, for the absolute and eternal. Actually, historical materialism by no means results from a reversal of the original Hegel, but of a Hegel who has already been transformed into an atheist.

This transformation had been brought about by the theologian Bruno Bauer, with whom Marx maintained close relations in the early forties. In this exchange Bauer, nine years older than Marx and in many ways a brilliant man, was the intellectual leader. The credit for showing that Marx's road from Hegel to Feuerbach passed by way of Bauer is due to another theologian, Ernst Barnikol. Bauer's crucial importance for Marx's development is ordinarily overlooked, and even Barnikol gives only an intimation of it, since his main interest is the relation between Bauer's and Marx's atheism, in connection with Bauer's work (published in 1843) *Das entdeckte Christentum* (Christianity discovered) which Barnikol himself brought to light. Since we possess not even a half-way adequate monograph on Bauer's critique of the gospels, and since secular historians are not in the habit of reading a theologian whom other theologians (despite the more penetrating judgments of Albert Schweitzer and William Wrede) ridicule as a "tendentious critic," it is not surprising that Bauer's interpretation of history, which through Marx has been so fraught with consequence, has up to now remained in the dark.

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Bauer had a strong feeling for the connection between historiography and the general *Weltanschauung* of its authors. This is revealed above all in his *Theological Explanation of the Gospels* in the (now seemingly very rare) fourth volume of his *Critique of the Gospels and History of Their Origin,* written in 1851 and 1852. The "lifelessness" of Strauss' *Life of Jesus* proves to him the inability of Hegel's metaphysics "to penetrate the soul of a historical phenomenon." He praises Weisse's "deep insight into evangelical history"; however, he writes: "Weisse called his philosophy positive . . . If it had really been positive, it would not longer be a metaphysical system, but critique and research—then it would no longer be dialectical but an exact science."

What could Marx learn from Bauer? What did he learn? Bauer's turn to atheism on a Hegelian basis meant elimination of the Hegelian "idea." It is replaced for Bauer by the "self-consciousness," which, as he wrote in the first volume of his *Critique of the Synoptic Gospels* "is no longer an individual self. The universality in which man appears as an unlimited number of individuals, is enhanced and divested of its punctuality." Or, translated from the Hegelian, it is not a metaphysical idea that is unfolded in the course of history but man's feeling and consciousness of self, or the self-consciousness of groups such as the early Christian community. This "self-consciousness" is for Bauer the "historical" or "real substance," which in the case of Christianity became the soul of a new world. This self-consciousness of man, which is the substance of the historical process, is transformed for Marx, who had become a materialist through Feuerbach, into the productive relations which determine man's (self-) consciousness. "Historicism" is so firmly anchored in Marx's consciousness through the influence of Bauer that his adoption of materialism was powerless to dislodge it.

For Bruno Bauer theological consciousness was the extreme of man's self-alienation; for it is a self-reflection of "religious consciousness, i.e., a consciousness in a state of alienation," of inner split and alienation from itself." His critique is therefore turned against religion. For Marx the extreme of alienation is attained in the proletariat, but this is already the consequence of his "materialistic" reversal of Bauer's Hegelian conception of history. By shifting the causes of man's alienation to the material and historical conditions of

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his existence, Marx comes to the conclusion that the important thing is not to interpret the world as the philosophers have done, but to change it. All these Hegelians "of the left" had aimed at the liberation of man from his self-alienation; in this Bauer, Feuerbach, Stirner and Marx concurred. Marx became the theoretician of the revolution, because he found the cause of man's alienation in material conditions created by history. This means that if the theory of historical materialism is abandoned, the theoretical justification of the revolution goes with it. Since historical materialism cannot be defended today on theoretical grounds, there are some who attempt to save it pragmatically by arguing that it is a theory of the revolution, growing out of man's will to change a world characterized by the interdependence of all "classes," both of the "substructure" and the "superstructure." But whereas for Marx the "changing" follows from the theory —and all in all this revolutionary remained a theoretician as long as he lived—the "changing" is no longer theoretically justified if the theory itself can be justified only through the will to "change."

IV

We have said that in the field of economics Marx used the customary methods of research, in disregard of his philosophy of history. But his philosophy taught him to see reality as essentially historical, and this gave him greater clarity than the economists of his day in his approach to a theory of economic development. He effected a remarkable synthesis between the historical thinking that was then taking form in Germany and the theoretical economics of the English. But the motif of historicism, if we may use the term, which he transplanted in the field of economics was immediately assimilated. His economics remained pure economics, independent of his ideas on the philosophy of history.

Is then historical materialism merely a product of the degenerescence of the Hegelian school? First of all: it reveals very diverse aspects with scarcely any cohesion between them. The socialists, as is readily comprehensible, are interested in the aspect that is expressed so clearly, and for them so optimistically in the *Communist Manifesto*: history is the history of class struggles. This assertion concerns the historian, who will say that in this general form it is simply untrue.

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Yet this is not vital to socialism; for socialism the *Manifesto* contains the far more important assertion that bourgeois property relations have become too narrow to encompass the wealth they have created. This concerns the economist. For the day when it was written, it was false; this has been shown by the economic development of capitalism in the intervening century. That it holds good for some future epoch, Marx and his disciples—and I should like to add, the non-Marxist Schumpeter—have offered no cogent proof.

But there is still a third assertion of historical materialism which the socialists take very much to heart, though today a good many are prepared to abandon it: that it is man's social existence, and ultimately his productive relations that determine his consciousness. In its banal, pan-economistic interpretation, this thesis is not even worth discussing, but it also expresses a truth. This truth is rather complex. It tells us that man's cosmos and "social existence" are intricately interwoven; but it certainly does not tell us that man's consciousness will be made more "actual" by the introduction of socialist productive relations. Socialist *faith* in the culture that will be ushered in by socialism is without scientific basis. The claim of historical materialism that a socialist transformation of productive relations will mean the liberation of man from his "alienation" has not been proved and is scarcely susceptible of proof.

If we consider "socialism" in its proper sphere, that of economics—and we have given some indication of what might be said on this score—and if we examine historical materialism in its true character which is philosophical, we discover three interrelated ideas with which modern philosophy is profoundly concerned. One is the idea of the historicity of human existence. It captured German philosophy through Dilthey—who was not without his debt to Hegel in this respect—and has attained its highest development in Heidegger. In its essential lines this idea is present in the early work of Marx: for Marx man is an essentially historical being. In the light of this idea, his emphasis on economic conditions as the determining factor in human life was a somewhat overhasty conclusion. The historicity of man is now a generally accepted idea.

The second idea is that of man's alienation. Marx saw the phenomenon and we may say that he saw it more clearly than anyone

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before him. But again its one-sided application to an economic class constitutes overhasty theorizing. This idea reappears in Nietzsche, and in Freud (who like Marx encumbers it with onesided theories). Here again we find the culmination in Heidegger (who in this point, to be sure, was influenced by Marx through George Lukacs) in his theory of the *"man,"* the impersonal "one," and of the role of inauthenticity in human existence. And in Jaspers the same theme occurs in a modified form.

The third idea lies in Marx's critique of ideologies: the idea that social existence determines consciousness. Here again Marx's choice of economic life as the "substructure" is only a hasty theoretical conclusion, but he arrived at it through his perception of a phenomenon that is familiar to us today as "perspectivism." Nietzsche, Ortega y Gasset, Scheler, and with Scheler the school of so-called *"Wissenssoziologie,"* (Sociology of knowledge), including such men as Mannheim, have disclosed what Marx perhaps less than his epigones had obscured with their robust economic interpretations.—All three of these ideas are closely interrelated, indeed they only express different aspects of the same underlying phenomenon, man.

The present sketch does not pretend to be a compendium of present-day knowledge in the fields discussed, but aims merely to show that the fertile seeds once contained in historical materialism have long ago burst the shell of "Marxism." We are in the midst of a historical crisis. It is utter childishness to attempt to reduce this crisis to the hundred year old alternative: "Capitalism or Socialism." The old class structure of Europe, even of the "capitalist" countries, has collapsed. The individual is in danger of being crushed by the state, by big business, by the unions, parties, and ideologies. The freedom of the individual is assaulted and threatened on every hand. He is told what he should do, eat, think, believe. And worse: within the individual himself an unfreedom is growing, a tendency to sink into the mass, to cast off the virile impulse that thrust him back upon himself, upon his own possibilities. In philosophy, sociology, economics, history, psychology and psychiatry, we have today a profounder insight into our times than was possible in previous epochs, but we derive our vision of the future from dusty books. Yet we know, or we are in a position to know, that the solution of the problems that beset us is not as simple as those formulas, whether of

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"capitalist" or "socialist" origin. We must restrain and curtail the powers of the state in order to make room for man. And this means only that in dealing with the realities of our age we must achieve a state of justice; for justice in this sense is synonymous with freedom and independence from external encroachments. Man has been profoundly disoriented, he has become uncertain in respect to himself; we must enable him to return to himself in freedom.

And Marx? Today he would not be a Marxist, and anyone who thinks he would call himself a socialist if he were among us, should consider that Marx, in possession of all that his times could teach him, had a vision of the future that was a vision of human freedom. After we have learned from Marx what can be learned from him, let us erase the last text that covers the Communist palimpsest. Only then, reduced to our own resources, children not of the nineteenth but of the twentieth century, shall we be able to free from all dogmatic superimpositions, the final word that is indelibly engraved upon it and to understand it as a simple demand for the natural right to realize a condition of justice, a condition in which

> "the free development of each makes possible the free development of all."

(*Translated from the German by Ralph Manheim*)

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CROSS-COUNTRY

MONTANA: OR THE END OF JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Hier oder Nirgends ist Amerika. Goethe

There is a sense, disturbing to good Montanans, in which Montana is a by-product of European letters, an invention of the Romantic movement in literature. In 1743 a white man penetrated Montana for the first time, but there was then simply nothing to *do* with it; nothing yet to do economically in the first place, but also no way of assimilating the land to the imagination. Before the secure establishment of the categories of the *"interessant"* and the "picturesque," how could one have come to terms with the inhumanly virginal landscape: the atrocious magnificence of the mountains, the illimitable brute fact of the prairies? A new setting for Hell, perhaps, but no background for any human feeling discovered up to that point; even *Sturm und Drang* was yet to come.

And what of the Indians? The redskin had been part of daily life in America and a display piece in Europe for a couple of hundred years, but he had not yet made the leap from a fact of existence to one of culture. *The Spirit of Christianity* of Chateaubriand and the expedition of Lewis and Clark that decisively opened Montana to the East were almost exactly contemporary, and both had to await the turn of the Nineteenth Century. Sacajawea, the Indian girl guide of Captain Clark (the legendary Sacajawea, of course, shorn of such disruptive realistic details as a husband, etc.), is as much a product of a new sensibility as Atala—and neither would have been possible without Rousseau and the beautiful lie of the Noble Savage. By the time the trapper had followed the explorer, and had been in turn followed by the Priest and the Prospector, George Catlin in paint and James Fenimore Cooper in the novel had fixed for the American imagination the fictive Indian and the legend of the ennobling wilderness: the primitive as Utopia. Montana was psychologically possible.

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One knows generally that behind the thin neo-Classical façade of Virginia and Philadelphia and Boston, the mythical meanings of America have traditionally been sustained by the Romantic sensibility (the hero of the first American novel died a suicide, a copy of *Werther* lying on the table beside him); that America had been unremittingly dreamed from East to West as a testament to the original goodness of man: from England and the Continent to the Atlantic Seaboard; from the Atlantic Seaboard to the Midwest; from the Midwest to the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific. And the margin where the Dream has encountered the resistance of fact, where the Noble Savage has confronted Original Sin (the edge of hysteria: of the twitching Revivals, ritual drunkenness, "shooting up the town," of the rape of nature and the almost compulsive slaughter of beasts) we call simply: the Frontier.

Guilt and the Frontier are coupled from the first; but the inhabitants of a Primary Frontier, struggling for existence under marginal conditions, have neither the time nor energy to feel *consciously* the contradiction between their actuality and their dream. Survival is for them a sufficient victory. The contradiction remains largely unrealized, geographically sundered; for those who continue to dream the Dream are in their safe East (Cooper in Westchester or New York City), and those who live the fact have become total Westerners, deliberately cut off from history and myth, immune even to the implications of their own landscape. On into the second stage of the Frontier, it is dangerous for any one who wants to *live* in a Western community to admire the scenery openly (it evokes the Dream); such sentiments are legitimate only for "dudes," that is to say, visitors and barnstorming politicians.

But the school-marm, pushing out before her the whore, symbol of the denial of Romance, moves in from the East to marry the Rancher or the Mining Engineer (a critical cultural event intuitively preserved as a convention of the Western movie); and the Dream and the fact confront each other openly. The school-teacher brings with her the sentimentalized Frontier novel, and on all levels a demand begins to grow for some kind of art to nurture the myth, to turn a way of life into a culture. The legend is ready-made and waiting, and speedily finds forms in the pulps, the movies, the Western Story, the fake cowboy song—manufactured at first by absentee Dudes, but

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later ground out on the spot by cultural "compradors." The secondary Frontier moves from naiveté to an elementary consciousness of history and discrepancy; on the one hand, it falsifies history, idealizing even the recent past into the image of the myth, while on the other hand, it is driven to lay bare the failures of its founders to live up to the Rousseauistic ideal. The West is re-invented!

At the present moment, Montana is in some respects such a Secondary Frontier, torn between an idolatrous regard for its refurbished past (the naive culture it holds up defiantly against the sophistication of the East, not realizing that the East *requires* of it precisely such a complementary role), and a vague feeling of guilt at the confrontation of the legend of its past with the real history that keeps breaking through. But in other respects, Montana has gone on to the next stage: the Tertiary or pseudo-Frontier, a past artificially contrived for commercial purposes, the Frontier as Bread and Butter.

In the last few years, Montana has seen an efflorescence of "Sherrif's Posses"; Dude Ranches; Chamber of Commerce Rodeos, hiring professional riders; and large-scale "Pioneer Days," during which the bank-clerk and the auto salesman grow beards and "go western" to keep the tourist-crammed coaches of the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern rolling. The East has come to see its ancient dream in action—and they demand it on the line, available for the two-weeks vacationer. What the Easterner expects, the Montanan is prepared to give him, a sham mounted half in cynicism, half with the sense that this is, after all, what the West really means, merely made visible, vivid. There is, too, a good deal of "play" involved, a not wholly unsympathetic boyish pleasure in dressing up and pulling the leg of the outlander, that overlays and to some degree mitigates the cruder motives of "going Western." But in Montana's larger cities and towns a new kind of entrepreneur has appeared: the Rodeo and Pioneer Days' Manager, to whom the West is strictly business. There is scarcely a Montanan who does not at one remove or another share in the hoax and in the take; who has not, like the Night-Club Negro or the Stage Irishman, become the pimp of his particularity, of the landscape and legend of his State.

Astonishingly ignorant of all this, I came from the East seven years ago to live in Montana, possessing only what might be called the standard Eastern equipment: the name of the State Capital

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(mispronounced); dim memories of a rather absurd poem that had appeared, I believe, in *The Nation*, and that began: "Hot afternoons have been in Montana . . . "; some information about Burton K. Wheeler, and the impression that Montana (or was it Idaho?) served Ernest Hemingway as a sort of alternative Green Hills of Africa. I had in short inherited a shabby remnant of the Romantic myth; and trembling on an even more remote periphery of remembering, I was aware of visions of the Indian (out of Cooper and "The Vanishing American") and the Cowboy, looking very much like Tom Mix. I was prepared not to call cattle "cows," and resolutely to face down any student who came to argue about his grades armed with a six-shooter.

I was met unexpectedly by the Montana Face.* What I had been expecting I do not clearly know; zest, I suppose, naiveté, a ruddy and straightforward kind of vigor—perhaps even honest brutality. What I found seemed, at first glance, reticent, sullen, weary—full of self-sufficient stupidity; a little later it appeared simply inarticulate, with all the dumb pathos of what cannot declare itself: a face developed not for sociability or feeling, but for facing into the weather. It said friendly things to be sure, and meant them; but it had no adequate physical expressions even for friendliness, and the muscles around the mouth and eyes were obviously unprepared to cope with the demands of any more complicated emotion. I felt a kind of innocence behind it, but an innocence difficult to distinguish from simple ignorance. In a way there was something heartening in dealing with people who had never seen, for instance, a Negro or a Jew or a Servant, and were immune to all their bitter meanings; but the same people, I knew, had never seen an Art Museum or a Ballet or even a movie in any language but their own, and the poverty of experience had left the possibilities of the human face in them incompletely realized.

"Healthy!" I was tempted to think contemptuously, missing the conventional stigmata of neurosis I had grown up thinking the

* Natives of Montana, it is only fair to say, don't believe in, don't *see* the Montana Face, though of course they can describe the Eastern face, black, harried, neurotic. It takes a long time before newcomers dare confide in each other what they all see, discover that they have not been enduring a lonely hallucination.

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inevitable concomitants of intelligence. It was true, certainly, that neither the uses or abuses of conversation, the intellectual play to which I was accustomed flourished here; in that sense the faces didn't lie. They were conditioned by a mean, a parsimonious culture; but they were by no means mentally incurious; certainly not "healthy," rather pricked invisibly by insecurity and guilt. To believe anything else was to submit to a kind of parody of the Noble Savage, the Healthy Savage—stupidity as mental health. Indeed, there was in their very inadequacy at expressing their inwardness, the possibility of pathos, at least—perhaps even tragedy. Such a face to stand at the focus of reality and myth, and in the midst of all the grandiloquence of the mountains! One reads behind it a challenge that demands a great, liberating art, a ritual of expression—and there is, of course, the movies!

The seediest moving picture theater in town, I soon discovered, showed every Saturday the same kind of Western Picture at which I had yelled and squirmed as a kid, clutching my box of jujubes; but in this context it was different. The children still eagerly attended, to be sure, but also the cowhands! In their run-over-at-the-heels boots and dirty jeans, they were apparently willing to invest a good part of their day off watching Gene and Roy, in carefully tailored togs, get the rustlers, save the ranch and secure the Right; meanwhile making their own jobs, their everyday work into a symbol of the Natural Gentleman at home.

They *believed it all*—not only that the Good triumphs in the end, but that the authentic hero is the man who herds cattle. Unlike, for instance, the soldier at the War Picture, they never snickered, but cheered at all the right places; and yet going out from contemplating their idealized selves to get drunk or laid, they must somehow have felt the discrepancy, as failure or irony or God knows what. Certainly for the bystander watching the cowboy, a comic-book under his arm, lounging beneath the bright poster of the latest Roy Rogers' film, there is the sense of a joke on someone—and no one to laugh. It is nothing less than the total myth of the goodness of man in a state of nature that is at stake every Saturday after the show at the Rialto; and though there is scarcely anyone who sees the issue clearly or as a whole, most Montanans are driven instinctively to try to close the gap.

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The real cowpuncher begins to emulate his Hollywood version; and the run-of-the mill professional Rodeo rider, who has turned a community work-festival into paying entertainment, is an intermediary between life and the Screen, the poor man's Gene Autrey. A strange set of circumstances has preserved in the Cowboy of the Horse Opera the Child of Nature, Natty Bumppo become Roy Rogers (the simple soul ennobled by intimacy with beasts and a virginal landscape), and has transformed his Saga into the National Myth. The boyhood of most living Americans does not go back beyond the first movie cowpuncher, and these days the kid without a cowboy outfit is a second-class citizen anywhere in America. Uncle Sam still survives as our public symbol; but actually America has come to picture itself in chaps rather than striped pants. Since we are comparatively history-less and culturally dependent, our claim to moral supremacy rests upon a belief that a high civilization is at a maximum distance from good-ness; the cowboy is more noble than the Earl.

But on the last frontiers of Montana, the noble lie of Rousseau is simply a lie; the face on the screen is de-bunked by the watcher. The Tourist, of course, can always go to the better theaters, drink at the more elegant bars beside the local property owner, dressed up for Pioneer Days. The cowhands go to the shabby movie house off the main drag and do their drinking in their own dismal places. And when the resident Easterner or the visitor attempts to pursue the cowpuncher to his authentic dive, the owner gets rich, chases out the older whores, puts in neon lights and linoleum—which, I suppose, serves everybody right.

But the better educated Montanan does not go to the Westerns. He discounts in advance the vulgar myth of the Cowboy, where the audience gives the fable the lie, moves the Dream, the locus of in-nocence, back into a remoter past; the surviving Cowboy is surrend-ered for the irrecoverable Pioneer. It is the Frontiersman, the Guide who are proposed as symbols of original nobility: Jim Bridger or John Colter, who outran half a tribe of Indians, barefoot over brambles. But this means giving up to begin with the possibilities that the discovery of a New World had seemed to promise: a present past, a primitive *now*, America as a contemporary Golden Age.

When the point of irreconcilable conflict between fact and fiction had been reached earlier, the Dream had been projected westward

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toward a new Frontier—but Montana is a *last Frontier;* there is no more ultimate West. Here the myth of the Noble Woodsman can no longer be maintained in space (the dream of Rousseau reaches a *cul de sac* at the Lions Club Luncheon in Missoula, Montana); it retreats from geography into time, from a discoverable West into the realm of an irrecoverable past. But even the past is not really safe.

Under the compulsion to examine his past (and there have been recently several investigations, culminating in the Rockefeller Foundation-sponsored Montana Study), the contemporary Montanan, pledged to history though nostalgic for myth, becomes willy-nilly an iconoclast. Beside a John Colter he discovers a Henry Plummer, the Sheriff who was for years secretly a bandit; and the lynch "justice" to which Plummer was brought seems to the modern point of view as ambiguous as his career. The figure of the Pioneer becomes ever more narrow, crude, brutal; his law is revealed as arbitrary force, his motive-power—greed. The Montanan poring over his past comes to seem like those dance-hall girls, of whom a local story tells, panning the ashes of a Road Agent who had been lynched and burned, for the gold it had been rumored he was carrying. Perhaps there had never been any gold in the first place. . . .

It is in his relations with the Indian that the Pioneer shows to worst advantage. The record of those relations is one of aggression and deceit, and more remotely, the smug assumption that anything goes with "Savages." There are honorable exceptions among the early missionaries, but it is hard for a Protestant culture to make a Jesuit its hero. For many years the famous painting of Custer's Last Stand hung in the State University, where the students of history were being taught facts that kept them from taking Custer for the innocent Victim, the symbolic figure of the whiteman betrayed by crafty redskins that he is elsewhere. In Montana it is difficult to see the slaughter at Little Big Horn as anything but the result of a tactical error in a long warfare with whose motives one can no longer sympathize.

Driving across Montana, the conscientious sight-seer who slows up for the signs that read "Historic Point 1000 Feet," can read the roadside marker beside US 2 at Chinook which memorializes "The usual fork-tongued methods of the white which had deprived these Indians of their hereditary lands," "One of the blackest records of our dealings with the Indians etc." Or at Poplar, he can learn how

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the Assiniboines "are now waiting passively for the fulfillment of treaties made with 'The Great White Father.' "

It is at first thoroughly disconcerting to discover such confessions of shame blessed by the State Legislature and blazoned on the main roads where travellers are enjoined to stop and notice. What motives can underlie such declarations: the feeling that simple confession is enough for absolution? a compulsion to blurt out one's utmost indignity? a shallow show of regret that protects a basic indifference? It is not only the road-markers that keep alive the memory of the repeated betrayals and acts of immoral appropriation that brought Montana into existence; there are books to document the story and community pageants to present it in dramatic form. The recollection of a common guilt comes to be almost a patriotic duty.

What is primarily involved is, I think, an attempt to *identify* with the Indian. Notice in the sentences quoted from highway signs the use of Indian terminology, "fork-tongued," "Great White Father" —the attempt to get *inside* the Indian's predicament. If the Pioneer seems an ignoble figure beside the Indian, it is perhaps because he was, as a Noble Savage, not quite savage enough; as close as he was to Nature, the White Pioneer, already corrupted by Europe and Civilization, could not achieve the saving closeness. "Civilization," a road-sign between Hysham and Forsyth ironically comments, "is a wonderful thing, according to some people." The corpse of Rousseau is still twitching.

At the beginnings of American literature, Cooper had suggested two avatars of primeval goodness: Pioneer and Indian, the alternative nobility of Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook; and the Montanan, struggling to hang on to the Romantic denial of Original Sin, turns to the latter, makes the injured Chief Joseph or Sitting Bull the Natural Gentleman in place of the deposed Frontiersman.

But the sentimentalized Indian will not stand up under scrutiny either. "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," the old folk-saying asserts; and indeed the Montanan who is busy keeping the living Indian in the ghetto of the reservation cannot afford to believe too sincerely in his nobility. The cruellest aspect of social life in Montana is the exclusion of the Indian; deprived of his best land, forbidden access to the upper levels of white society, kept out of any job involving prestige, even in some churches confined to the

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back rows; but of course protected from whiskey and comforted with hot lunches and free hospitals, the actual Indian is a constant reproach to the Montanan, who feels himself Nature's own democrat, and scorns the South for its treatment of the Negro, the East for its attitude toward the Jews. To justify the continuing exclusion of the Indian, the local white has evolved the theory that the Redskin is *naturally* dirty, lazy, dishonest, incapable of assuming responsibility—a troublesome child; and this theory confronts dumbly any attempt at re-asserting the myth of the Noble Savage.

The trick is, of course, to *keep* the Indian what he is, so that he may be pointed out, his present state held up as a justification for what has been done to him. And the trick works; the Indian acts as he is expected to; confirmed in indolence and filth, sustained by an occasional smuggled bout of drunkenness, he does not seem even to have clung to his original resentment, lapsing rather into apathy and a certain self-contempt. The only thing white civilization had brought to the Indian that might be judged a good, was a new religion; but one hears tales now of the rise of dope-cults, of "Indian Christianity," in which Jesus and Mary and the drug *peyote* are equally adored. Once I travelled for two days with an Indian boy on his way to be inducted into the Army; and when he opened the one paper satchel he carried, there was in it—a single extra suit of long underwear and forty comic-books, all the goods, material and spiritual, with which our culture had endowed him.

On the side of the whites, there is, I think, a constantly nagging though unconfessed sense of guilt, perhaps the chief terror that struggles to be registered on the baffled Montana Face. It is a struggle much more difficult for the Montana "Liberal" to deal with than those other conflicts between the desired and the actual to which he turns almost with relief: the fight with the Power Company or the Anaconda Copper Mining Company for the instruments of communication and the possibilities of freedom. The latter struggles tend to pre-empt the liberal's imagination, because on them he can take an unequivocal stand; but in respect to the Indian he is torn with inner feelings of guilt, the knowledge of his own complicity in perpetuating the stereotypes of prejudice and discrimination. In that relationship he cannot wholly dissociate himself from the oppressors; by his color, he is born into the camp of the Enemy.

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There is, of course, no easy solution to the Indian problem; but so long as the Montanan fails to come to terms with the Indian, despised and outcast in his open-air ghettos, just so long will he be incapable of coming to terms with his own real past, of making the adjustment between myth and reality upon which a successful culture depends. When he admits that the Noble Savage is a lie; when he has learned that his State is where the myth comes to die (it is here, one is reminded, that the original of Huck Finn ended his days, a respected citizen), the Montanan may find the possibilities of tragedy and poetry for which so far he has searched his life in vain.

Leslie A. Fiedler

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VARIETY

VIEWS OF A SECOND VIOLINIST

(Some Answers to Questions about Writing Poetry)

Questions about the practice of writing poetry make me very nervous because my answers look strange after a newspaper reporter has rendered them. For instance, one time, I replied to a question about meter by saying that there was no such thing as free verse, but only different kinds of rhythm. By the time this careless remark reached the printed page, it turned out that I had denied the existence of poems which were called free verse. This inexactitude may not seem important, but I feel that there is too much misunderstanding in the world as it is, and if that is the best that can be done in the way of accurate repetition, I would rather shut up. However, it is necessary that one be polite, no matter what or how great the provocation. This requirement of politeness nearly ruined me, however, once when I was questioned as to whether the most important element in modern poetry was the intellectual factor or the emotional factor. Naturally I was stupefied. But politeness made me reply that it was just like the weather, sometimes it was too hot, sometimes it was too cold, sometimes the weather was just plain boring, and the less attention one paid to it, the better. My questioner, a very kind lady, who was just trying to make conversation, looked so alarmed at my answer that I hastened to assure her that Plato and Dryden were wrong when they declared that poets were practically insane. The next questioner was the feature writer, whatever that is, for a fashionable fashion magazine which printed literary prattle and the like to break the flow of gorgeous garment prose. Needless to say, I was on guard. The first question was as to how I had decided to become a poet, so I explained that as an infant in the cradle I had cried loudly and received immediate and unanimous attention; consequently, putting two and two together, I had tried crying out loudly in public and in blank verse, and the results had on the whole been most gratifying. My questioner seemed to like this answer very much, for she wrote it down quickly in shorthand and then inquired as to what was the greatest influence upon me? I was about to say Shakespeare and the depression of 1929-1937, but this was all too true, and since the truth had been distorted so often in all previous exchanges, I answered: pre-natal experiences, for this was the first thing that came into my head. She took it as a *double entendre*, I think, for she left in a rage.

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Since then, feeling badly about how all these well-meant inquisitions have turned out, I've given the whole subject cool and careful thought. The chief dangers, I've decided, are as follows: one may be too technical; or fleeing from technical observations and shop-talk, one may become oracular and thus very pretentious about poets as unacknowledged legislators and similar braggadocio; and from this extreme, one swings to facetiousness and receives a sickly, uneasy grin because poets are supposed to be very serious; and then, worst of all, one becomes too personal, thus infuriating other poets, although other people just love these intimate disclosures.

Conscious of these dangers, and others I have not troubled to mention, I've often resorted to or been reduced to silence. But I feel now that no amount of circumspection will protect me, so I might as well speak freely. I choose two professional problems which have long preoccupied me.

One of these problems is that of how much poetry one ought to write and how much one ought to publish. After much reflection, I've decided that one ought to write as much as possible and publish as little as possible. The latter conclusion follows from the glum fact that most poetry is likely to be bad, if judged by any standards which would justify the assertion that some poetry is good. On the other hand, one ought to write as much as possible because, among other reasons, there is no way of telling in advance whether the poem one is about to write is going to be good. Moreover, the writing of bad poems is often a way of arriving at the writing of good poems. By publishing only work which one is reasonably comfortable about, or work which is in an idiom one no longer cultivates, one escapes the remorse of looking at one's bad poems in print and the paralyzing effects which may ensue. Horace advises one to wait for nine years before publishing a poem; and a very gifted modern poet told me that it is best to publish as much as possible, for one can always write more poems. Both pieces of advice may be good for some poets or good under certain conditions; but for most poets to wait, to be patient, to re-write and keep looking at one's poems is the best possible method of procedure, if one is interested in writing good poems rather than in being regarded as a poet. There is nothing wrong in wanting to be known as a poet, but the desire to write good poems is more fruitful in the long run. Many good poets have been spoiled by the belief that they had to rush into print with a new book every year, and only a few have been weakened by revision, patience, and privacy.

This question is important in itself now, since the example of Auden has intensified the natural de-

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sire to appear in print very often; and it is also a significant problem because in trying to face it, one has to face the whole problem of the nature of poetry.

So too with the second problem, the relationship of any modern poet to his audience and to the well-known difficulty of modern poetry, a difficulty which obviously involves the audience. Anyone who wants to understand modern poetry can do so by working about half as hard as he must to learn a language, or acquire any new skill, or learn to play bridge well. The real problem is the effect upon the poet himself of the reader's feeling that modern poetry is difficult. His most frequent response of late has been one of panic, a panic which leads to false moves and desperate oversimplifications. One fashion or tendency for the last fifteen years, at least, has been to try to write poetry which would be intelligible to any audience. And meanwhile the extent of the difficulty has somehow increased in the public's mind, perhaps because the public has been preoccupied with matters other than literature. For a long time, "The Waste Land" seemed the perfect example of modern poetry's obscurity, but nowadays even the beautifully lucid poems of Robert Frost are said to be obscure. Perhaps this development is all to the good, since it may prevent poets from forcing themselves to try to be popular. But the fundamental problem presents itself falsely as long as it is supposed that the kind of poetry one produces is solely a matter of choice or will. Choice and will are involved, of course, but there is also present a large and inescapable relationship, a relationship which may well be prior because it has had a great deal to do with making the poet interested in writing poetry from the very start. Any modern poet exists in an inescapable relationship to all the modern and modernist poetry which has been written since Baudelaire. He can choose to disregard or forget about this complicated relationship; but if he does, he is depriving himself of what is an important part of his inheritance as a poet, and a powerful presence in the minds of everyone who is capable of reading poetry.

Consequently the modern poet is bound to be drawn in two apparently opposed directions. On the one hand, it is natural that he should want to write as directly and clearly as Yeats and Frost at their best (which is not to forget that their directness and clarity were accomplished only by means of a great deal of intellectual toil and obscure or esoteric delvings). On the other hand, he is bound to be drawn toward an emulation of the marvellous refinements in the uses and powers of language which have occurred since the symbolists appeared.

The best convenient example of this cultivation of language is this

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little poem which appears in James Joyce's *Ulysses*:

> White thy fambles, red thy gan,
> And thy quarrons dainty is.
> Couch a hogshead with me then
> In the darkmans clip and kiss.

(I choose this example not only for its convenient brevity, but also because it is an omen or beginning of *Finnegans Wake,* an overwhelming work which, if it concludes an epoch, also initiates a new one.) The obscurity of the little poem in *Ulysses* is not reduced very much by its context in the novel. And even when the reader finds out, as he may not unless he reads Stuart Gilbert's commentary on *Ulysses,* that the words he does not understand, or only imperfectly understands, are gypsy slang, he may be disturbed by the poem or resent the author's use of unfamiliar and special words. Indeed, it can be argued (in a misleading way or in an illuminating one) that the beauty of this poem and the powerful emotion it communicates come through best of all when the reader does not know exactly what the exact gypsy meanings of the words are. For example, "couch a hogshead" means "lie down and sleep," and if one knows this in advance, some of the richness of connotation may be blocked off.

Every modern poet would like to be direct, lucid, and immediately intelligible, at least most of the time. In fact, one of the most fantastic misconceptions of modern literature and modern art in general is the widespread delusion that

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the modern artist does not want and would not like a vast popular audience, if this were possible without the sacrifice of some necessary quality in his work. But it is often not possible. And every modern poet would also like to be successful, popular, famous, rich, cheered on Broadway, sought by Hollywood, recited on the radio, and admired by Mr. J. Donald Adams. The renunciation of popularity does not arise from any poet's desire to punish himself and deprive himself of these glorious prizes and delectable rewards. The basic cause is a consciousness of the powers and possibilities of language, a consciousness which cannot be discarded with any more ease than one can regain one's innocence.

Some will doubtless continue to be irritated by the cultivation of language of which Joyce's poem is a somewhat extreme instance. And they will waste time, mind, and energy in defensive attitudes, denouncing or denying the virtues of this kind of writing.

And some will try to imitate and extend literally and mechanically the direction which Joyce represents.

And some will try to find a point at which the clarity of Yeats can be sought at the same time as one seeks the richness which Joyce possessed.

This last effort or ambition may be as quixotic and contradictory as an attempt to square the circle. But given the consciousness of literature likely in any one who wants to write good poetry, anything less than the reconciliation of these extremes is far from enough. As some Indian chief once said at a dinner in the White House after he had had two portions of everything but remained hungry: *A little too much of everything is just enough for me.*

* * *

Orpheus once visited a colleague. His name was Agathon and he was a famous poet and critic of the time. Indeed he was much better known than Orpheus then, for the latter had not yet attracted to himself the widespread publicity which followed upon his sensational adventures in trying to get his wife to return to him.

Orpheus showed Agathon his most recent work, requesting a critical opinion, but hoping for praise and admiration.

"Frankly," said Agathon, "these poems are worthless. Even a fellow-poet like myself has a hard time understanding them. You can imagine what the common reader will and will not make of them. Why don't you write the way the old boys did? *This is not what the public wants.*"

"I do my best," said Orpheus meekly (he was very disappointed but grateful for his friend's candor), "I write whatever I can."

This story is endless. I hope to discuss it at greater length in the future. One must not be deceived by Orpheus' subsequent career

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which was largely in the nature of an escapade and *tour de force.* Every genuine poet is now in the same boat as Orpheus was then. Agathon was right to say what he did say. What would have been the point of being other than sincere, if that was the way he felt?

"Amor omnia vincit," muttered Orpheus under his breath as he left, "Love always wins out. Poetry is its own reward. Maybe Agathon is right. Maybe he is wrong."

Obviously the above interview may be interpreted in several different ways.

Delmore Schwartz

LORD ELDON REVISITED

It is hardly original to proclaim that our time is one of crisis. "The material and spiritual havoc wrought by two world wars," "the ominous outcome of the socialist experiment in Soviet Russia," "the bankruptcy of old-time Liberalism with its assurance of inevitable progress,"—these phrases (and the reality reflected in them) confront us at every turn. What are we to do? We are told that we must steer a middle course between the actual dangers of Communism and the potential dangers of reviving Fascism without running aground on those sandbanks of indecision where

The best lack all conviction,
while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity....

In order to do this we are to gather together all men of good will whose primary interest lies in the preservation of our democratic institutions in a time of troubles.

Not so long ago, a parlor game both fashionable and easy to play was to attack and deride people simply because they called themselves conservatives. The very word "businessman" regularly drew cries of "reaction!" as if superior economic status ever implied a certain attitude toward political questions. We know better now. In this era of skepticism and confusion the great conservative tradition can and must infuse new life into values and ideals that have had to give all too much ground in recent years: moderation in politics, classicism in literature, and religion in our daily lives. The time has come for a reassessment of our democratic heritage—be it "liberal" or "conservative." And for such a reassessment we can hardly find a better starting point than the life and thought of John Scott, earl of Eldon, Lord Chancellor of England during one of the most critical periods in her history—the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Lord Eldon has been much maligned by most historians of modern England who tend to regard him as "representative of the pig-tail school of Toryism," "leader of the ultra-Tories," or "the complete standpatter." In support of these judgments they cite his close con-

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nection with the repressive policies pursued by Tory governments from 1790 to 1830 against all popular, democratic movements — whether these found expression in sympathy with the French Revolution or in demands for parliamentary reform; his bitter and unrelenting opposition to any proposed relief of the restrictions upon Catholics and non-conformists; his refusal to support measures for the abolition of the slave trade and for humanitarian revisions of the penal code; and his unvarying attitude of suspicion and hostility toward innovations of any kind.

While all this undoubtedly has some basis in fact, a closer examination of Eldon's ideas reveals that far from having been the reactionary ogre of the history books, he was a man with a vital message for our time, a message we cannot well afford to ignore.

For Lord Eldon, like ourselves, lived in a period of revolution and ideological conflict. Yet, unlike certain innocents of our day, he never came to believe that new ways of thinking were either necessary or desirable. He held that the aim of all government was to secure the peace and promote the happiness of the people. "But," he went on to say, "to those who are endeavoring to disturb society I must deny the appellation of 'the people.'" To disturb society meant to disturb the British constitution. And to hand this down to posterity as it had been transmitted from preceding times was, for Eldon as for Burke, a sacred duty. Speaking in the House of Lords shortly after the "Peterloo Massacre" of 1819, in the course of which magistrates had ordered cavalry to charge into a crowd assembled near Manchester to demand universal suffrage, Eldon praised Burke as "that great man, who has been instrumental toward the adoption of that policy which has saved the country and rendered England what England is now." "That policy" was, needless to say, Burke's opposition to the French Revolution and the ideas it represented. There are some who still persist in maintaining that Burke, great thinker though he was, misunderstood the French Revolution entirely; and that his veneration for French established institutions before 1789 was largely misplaced. But most of us know that to believe that revolutions ever change anything is to be taken in by the pious hopes and delusions of the increasingly crepuscular Enlightenment. Burke's wisdom about this as well as all other problems of human society supplies both challenge and example for our day.

Speaking in 1810 against a proposal "to abolish the punishment of death in cases of privately stealing to the amount of five shillings in a shop," Eldon reveals that he, too, has had his fill of rationalist world-improvers and their Utopias: "It is needless for us to differ about theories, if the practice reconciles the difference," he tells the House

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of Lords. He writes in a similar vein about the Spanish revolutionaries who were trying to force Ferdinand VII to restore the constitution he had abrogated:

> A few of them have read a few theoretical French books on government and forgetting that man is a creature of habit, have totally forgot that civil institutions can only be very gradually changed, and very slowly improved.

"Man is a creature of habit." Thus, in one short sentence, Eldon dispels the fog of "natural rights" and "natural laws" which had settled over political theory in the course of the eighteenth century. The Lord Chancellor "was no enemy to real reform; but he would ever oppose that which, under the semblance of reform, committed injustice." This forthright declaration, made during a speech opposing the extension of the franchise to the freeholders of the county of Aylesbury, should give the lie to those who cannot desist from identifying conservatism with opposition to change.

Can we derive any lessons for the present from Lord Eldon's views on foreign policy? Unlike another great conservative, Prince Metternich, Eldon was not primarily interested in foreign affairs. However, it is worth pointing out that in contrast to many so-called "liberals" he opposed any interference in the affairs of other nations. He writes his son in 1823: "France and Spain are so foolish as

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to go to war with each other, and probably they may both sorely repent it before it concludes. I hope old England will have the good sense to know the value of peace and quiet, and not suffer its repose to be disturbed." What we miss here is Metternich's emphasis on the need for a Concert of Europe. But, as Eldon himself felicitously put it:

> I am an Englishman, an old Englishman; I have English habits and English feelings.

And while conservatives of our day may reprobate so provincial a sentiment, they can at least rejoice that in Lord Eldon it was not accompanied by that baneful romanticism which made nineteenth-century German nationalism so much more repellent than that of any other country. (And which, as we now know, is the root cause of the Nazi movement, the second world war, and the present world crisis.)

The Lord Chancellor's literary tastes encompassed little more than some of the classics and Dr. Johnson; and the following extract from a poem he wrote on the occasion of his fortieth wedding anniversary should exculpate him from any affinity with Shelley and Novalis:

> *Can it, my lovely Bessy, be,*
> *That when near forty years are past,*
> *I still my lovely Bessy see*
> *Dearer and dearer at the last?*

In the interests of historical accuracy we must not, however, omit mention of an incident which almost led to Eldon's shaking hands with a notorious Romantic and revolutionary of the period. When Lord Byron assumed his seat in the House of Lords in 1809 the Lord Chancellor (as was customary) put out his hand to welcome him. But the worst was averted. An eyewitness informs us that the poet confined himself to bowing stiffly and extending no more than the tips of his fingers. This removes the last suspicion of collusion with the Romantics from Lord Eldon and should reassure those who are still skeptical of his qualifications as a prophet of the new conservatism.

These same skeptics will probably not be totally convinced, until they have taken cognizance of Eldon's deep and genuine religious piety. Today, when the forces of evil abroad in the world have only mockery and derision for religion, when even in our own midst there are those who do not consider consciousness of original sin a prerequisite for historical understanding, it is comforting to find that Lord Eldon originally intended to take orders and "never ceased to delight" in those sacred studies to which his life was once dedicated. It is conceivable that his axiom that "a truly religious temper is a cheerful temper" and his disapproval of "a morose, canting, fanatical temper" will have a discouraging sound for some; and that his refusal to extend equal political

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rights to Catholics and non-conformists will disappoint others. But no one can fail to be moved by the account of a servant named Smith who relates that his master frequently read in the Bible and, "when in bed, was in the habit of praying aloud."

A man who saw the foolishness and futility of the French Revolution and of the "enlightened" rationalism which helped bring it about, who knew that change (in those rare instances when it was needed) must be gradual to be effective, who recognized the dangers of romanticism, and who never wavered in his faith, Lord Eldon stands forth as an example for our generation. His adherence to tradition lacked the unfailing constancy we must demand today, for when he became Lord Chief Justice in 1799 he begged the King to excuse him from wearing the traditional wig when not engaged in performing official functions; partly because he suffered from headaches and partly because his wife didn't like him in a wig. But the King brought him back to the right path, from which he was never to deviate. "No, no," said George III, "I will have no innovations in my time."

John Clive

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CORRESPONDENCE

THE CIVIL WAR AND REVISIONISM

Sirs:

I trust that you will not take amiss a few criticisms of your—generally outstanding—October issue. While George Orwell's previous work well merits the praise you bestow, his latest work is actually a foible erected into prediction—little else than a monumental decline not of civilization but of Orwell. Any widespread use of such a work can give comfort only to the men of 1884, not the coming generations of thought and of action.

Far more serious, however, than the PR award is the article by Arthur Schlesinger, jr. While paying profound reverence to his historical scholarship and his brilliantly incisive interpretations in all his work to date — and agreeing with his political viewpoints—I find myself deeply disturbed by his article in this issue. I believe that Mr. Schlesinger has misrepresented a whole generation of scholars as a generation of vipers; while setting forward some of the basic assumptions of the "revisionist" school through the use of carefully (one might even say viciously) selected extrapolations, he ignores others. The War was a failure of the democratic process to solve the national problems, the retreat of moderation in the face of extremism. To turn Schlesinger against himself, the "vital center" of a century ago was broken. Further, none of the revisionists would deny the existence of great moral issues or contest the validity of Eaton's contentions that the South had abolished freedom of thought; they assume that the politics of compromise could have been substituted for the politics of emotion, even at that late date.

This debate about the causes of the Civil War has been proceeding with increasing intensity of late, and I am inclined to think that Schlesinger's challenge to his fellow historians should not be ignored. As a former student of Prof. Craven's, I feel that his position has been somewhat misrepresented, and that this whole problem can well bear further analysis in the pages of PR. Although perhaps Craven and Randall would not bother to reply, I am sure that the glib and facile castigation of a large group of historians as "sentimentalists"—which they emphatically are not—will not escape without proper retort, and I think you should canvass scholars such as Roy Nichols, Allen Nevins and David M. Potter. I believe that someone of established reputation in the field should take up the cudgels against Schlesinger, otherwise I would enjoy the task myself. I may say that I am collecting material for a work on the uses of emotion in politics in the nineteenth century, and the twentieth.

While I agree with a great part of Mr. Schlesinger's argument, I believe he has unjustly singled out a large group of historians and pilloried them for the sake of his arguments, which basically read back into history the moral question of today: is it just to kill for freedom? Not overlooking that question, one can still ask for justice among scholars. Jakob Burckhardt once said that "the terrible simplifiers" would be the scourge of our century, and we have certainly seen enough of them within the past generation. I would certainly hate to see one of the most brilliant men of my own generation add himself to their number.

Boston, Mass. **George D. Blackwood**

REPLY

Mr. Blackwood's letter gives point to the wistful hope which underlay my article. For some years, along with other American historians, I have been

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seeking by means of book reviews and lectures to stimulate the Civil War revisionists to a reconsideration and defense of their position. Since these efforts produced nothing except a waspish private letter from one revisionist, I decided to cast my questions in the form of an article. Mr. Blackwood criticizes that article sharply, as he has every right to do; but he does not really answer it (or, to do him justice, pretend to answer it). I wish that he or someone would write an answer; I am sure, for example, that Mr. Blackwood would do an excellent job. I wrote the piece in the first instance in the hope of provoking such an answer. But there is no point in my trying to answer the answer until it moves from the realm of assertion to the realm of demonstration.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

SADE AND LIBERTY

Sirs:

Less familiar with the works of Ernst Juenger than with those of the Marquis de Sade, we should still want to question the former's treatment of the latter (in your October issue) and your own judgment in translating and publishing the passage.

Lifting a critical leg on Sade was great sport throughout the nineteenth century, but we had supposed PR would await a less cursory study of so paradoxical and ambiguous a writer. Sade, you will recall, was much admired, in private, by Flaubert and Baudelaire, and has been publicly praised by Apollinaire and the two literary generations that have succeeded his. At least, we had expected PR to get the title straight—it is *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*—and to have avoided an irresistible association on Marquis James. Editions of that work, incidentally, employ dots, not dashes, to break up long passages of conversation, as elsewhere in Sade. As for the "endless succession of synonymous words," we suggest the whole pattern of Herr Juenger's impressions needs examination.

Surely anyone has a perfect right to prefer literary sex periwigged, impish and even fragrant, as Herr Juenger in Laclos, Crébillon *fils* and Octave Mirbeau (sic). And even cruelty of the contemplative kind to that of "the unbridled will." A man of such preferences might well become shocked by Nazism and attack it allegorically, in all the "benevolence" of his "free creative energy." We all, readers of PR, can discern the idealistic consistency of Herr Juenger's politics and aesthetic, but we do not all know, nor does Herr Juenger mention, the rather less contemplative character of Sade's behavior during the decade 1790-1800. We believe it makes an interesting contrast so we shall summarize it.

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During the twelve years of his arbitrary confinement under *lettre de cachet* in Vincennes and the Bastille, Sade (who was born in 1740) had become a writer. It was in the sacking of the Bastille on July 14th, 1789, that the manuscript of his first novel, *Les 120 Journées de Sodome,* disappeared, the first of Sade's great erotic works which most certainly do examine "that bestiality" which, thanks to Sade, Herr Juenger is able to discern as one of Rousseauism's "basic components." Upon his release in 1790, Sade, the aristocrat, owner of large estates in the Vaucluse, becomes an ardent Jacobin, eventually secretary of his section, organizer of cavalry for the revolutionary defense of Paris, ultimately member of a jury passing judgment upon adherents of the former regime. (We are in August, 1793.) During a "stormy session" on the night of the 3d, Sade refuses to put to the vote "an inhuman motion" and passes the chair to the vice-president. (His opposition to all forms of corporal punishment and to the death sentence are explicit in all his works.) He continues his Jacobin activity, and continues to publish and prepare for publication both erotic and political writings. In December he is arrested and the question of his political reliability is examined.

His revolutionary detention lasts eleven months—it is from the windows of one of these prisons that he watches some hundreds of executions. Already in 1793, in the novel *Aline et Valcour,* he had cautioned against the creation of a revolutionary tyranny as bad as the old one, and even the *Philosophie dans le Boudoir* (1795) consists, by one-third, of his pamphlet, *Frenchmen! One Last Effort If You Would Still be Republicans!* Later, under the Consulate, Sade writes a violent attack on the morals and competence of Napoleon's circle, a gesture which costs him the longest imprisonment of all: from 1801 to his death in 1814. Napoleon's police make periodical, thorough searches and destroy every scrap of the num-

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erous manuscripts he composed during these years. Thus, in barest outline, one writer's response to peculiarly challenging historical circumstances.

As Jean Paulhan observed, Sade earned the right, if anyone ever did, to speak out on the question of freedom—to which we would add, "and the right to examine as ruthlessly as seemed to him appropriate the philosophic bases of his own historical behavior." Not Voltairean lucidity, as Herr Juenger would have it, but a certain late nineteenth-century idealism and aesthetic impressionism are "the opposite" of Sade's "bestiality." Not that Herr J. is not correct in hearing the howl of the aardwolf in Sade's bitterly pessimistic *reductio ad absurdum* of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, i.e., his own philosophy. The point is, Sade had the wit and the courage not to mistake the beast for another clump of silk flowers in the first place, let alone to blur both life and art by the juxtaposition of a Chinese torture garden between man and his unwholesome history.

Herr Juenger's defense is mankind's "unexpressed Compact" to ignore the voice that rises to say, "Now just among us beasts—." Which proves Herr Juenger a gentleman, as well as an anti-Nazi. Unfortunately, it is in his own example of Sade that we are privileged to recall the bitter fact that there are situations where, if we aspire like Herr Juenger to the heroism of Ulysses, we must follow the track of the aardwolf to his lair. It is ironic, perhaps, how of contemporary European writers, it is Herr Juenger who seems to have least understanding of those historical perspectives which Sade's countrymen have come to call *l'univers concentrationnaire.*

New York City **E. S. Seldon**

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